

The Municipality of Grey Highlands

Water & Wastewater Department

Sanitary Sewer Operations – DO’S AND DON’TS

Following the suggestions listed below may help to save residents money and avoid significant inconvenience, as well as costs to the community for clearing and repairing blockages. In some instances, depending on where the blockage is located, the property owner or resident may have to bear the cost of clearing the line. Also, when an overflow occurs due to a blockage, there may be environmental impacts.

Remember, most sanitary sewer blockages occur between the house and the Municipality’s sanitary trunk line situated in the middle of the street. In this instance it will be the responsibility of the home owner to cover the cost of clearing the blockage

SEWER DO NOT’S

DO NOT pour fats, oils and cooking grease down the sink drain.

- Why? If your pots and pans are just oily or greasy, don’t rinse them; wipe them out with a paper towel.

DO NOT pour sour milk down the sink.

- Why? One litre of full cream milk has enough fat in it to cover the surface of an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Simply dispose through your garbage.

DO NOT use the toilet as a wastebasket/garbage can.

DO NOT use the sewer as a means to dispose of food scraps.

DO NOT wash food scraps, tea leaves, coffee grounds and eggshells down the sink.

DO NOT flush razor blades, condoms, pharmaceutical products, cigarette butts, nail polish remover, toilet deodorant dispensers or other non-biodegradable products down the toilet. Also, toys can find their way into the system and cause problems.

- The proper way to dispose of these items is in your garbage. Pharmaceutical products (tablets, capsules and medicines) should be taken to your pharmacy for safe disposal.

DO NOT place jewelry and valuables on the edge of the basin or the sink.

- Once flushed down the toilet, valuable and valued items are very difficult to recover. Take care not to drop dentures and wallets into the toilet.

DO NOT flush diapers, sanitary napkins, tampons, convenience pads, surgical bandages, syringes and cotton tipped stems or pantyhose down the toilet.

DO NOT dispose of plastics and plastic film from personal hygiene items, including disposable diapers, as these are one of the most common causes of private sewer blockages.

- For soiled diapers, the best solution is to empty the contents into the toilet and then put the diaper in a plastic bag and into the garbage.

DO NOT use excess detergent for washing up in the kitchen or laundry than what the manufacturers recommend for washing dishes and clothes. When these detergents enter the sewage system, they hold large amounts of oil, grease and fats in suspension making cleaning and treating the wastewater difficult and more costly. By cutting down on the amount of detergent used, there'll also be less phosphate in the environment to cause the growth of algae in the water. And to top it off, you'll save money on buying the detergents.

DO NOT pour paint, engine oil, pesticides or chemicals down the sink, and don't try to burn them. Some hazardous materials can corrode the sewer, while others complicate the treatment process. In fact, dumping them in the sewer is illegal and you could be heavily fined. This isn't only because of the threat of these hazards getting into the environment, but also because these chemicals pose a health threat to maintenance and repair crews working in the sewers. Similarly, by throwing hazardous materials into the garbage, you are creating a potential risk for garbage collectors. Instead, store the chemicals in sealed containers and contact the Municipality for advise on where to dispose of them. Also, don't ever try to burn these chemicals on your barbecue, in your fireplace or in the incinerator – they could produce toxic fumes that could seriously damage your health.

DO NOT flush a commercial grease interceptor with hot water to clear or clean the inceptor in lieu of cleaning and pumping out the inceptor.

SEWER DO'S

DO let liquid fat, oil or grease cool and dispose of it in your organic waste bin or household garbage. It is not recommended to place fats/greases on your compost heap; this can attract rodents and it will also slow down the composting process.

- If your pots and pans are just oily or greasy, wipe them clean with a paper towel and put the soiled paper towel in the green organic waste bin for collection at the curb.

DO scrape excess grease into the green organic container for collection at the curb.

DO place food scraps in the green organic waste container for collection at the curb, or start a compost pile; promote the use of scraping dishware prior to washing.

DO place a wastebasket in the bathroom to dispose of solid wastes. Disposable diapers, condoms, and personal hygiene products do not belong in the sewer system.

DO use a strainer over the plughole in your sink, tub and shower. Then either empty the collected materials into the green organic waste container, or better still, add them to your compost heap.

DO use a composter. If you don't have a compost heap, start one with lawn clippings, garden rubbish and food scraps and use the compost to fertilize your garden.

DO use the manufacturer's recommended amount of detergent for washing up in the kitchen or laundry. The average household uses three times more detergent than recommended for washing dishes and clothes. When these detergents enter the sewage system, they hold large amounts of oil, grease and fats in suspension making cleaning and treating the wastewater difficult and more costly. By cutting down on the amount of detergent used, there will also be less phosphate in the environment to cause the growth of algae in water. Also, you'll save money on buying the detergents. The Provincial Government and some environmental agencies and organizations are promoting a reduction in the use of detergents and, in some cases, people don't even have to use the recommended amount of detergent. Manufacturers use a typical water hardness (123 mg/L) to determine the recommended amount of detergent to use.