For immediate release

April 6, 2020

The Prince William County Service Authority is appealing to customers who flush wipes down the toilet to throw them in the garbage instead.

Whether you are using wipes as a substitute for toilet paper or to disinfect surfaces, wipes are NOT "flushable" – even if they say so on the label. Flushing wipes can lead to clogged pipes in your home and sewer main stoppages in the street, so toss them in the trash can.

Wipes don’t break down in the sewer system like toilet paper and often cling to grease inside sewer lines. If this scenario occurs too often, a blockage can form and lead to sewage backups. In the past, the Service Authority has had to temporarily shut down its two pump stations at the H.L. Mooney Advanced Water Reclamation Facility to allow staff to remove large volumes of wipes that have made their way through the sewage collection system.

Most pump stations throughout the system have bar screens and channel grinders that chop up debris in sewage. However, when the Service Authority takes a channel grinder out of service for maintenance or if sewage flows are high, wipes often accumulate on the bar screens. When that occurs, Service Authority field staff must put on personal protective equipment and remove them manually. Several 55-gallon drums worth of debris can be collected in a single month, the majority of which are is composed of wipes.

For the sake of your plumbing, the sanitary sewer system and the environment, only pee, poop and toilet paper should be flushed down the toilet.