



Clackamas Water Environment Services: Wet wipes combined with grease and other non-flushable materials, create ropery mats that clog sewer pumps that workers must remove manually.

The Problem

Since the early 2000s, sewer system clogs and damaged equipment throughout the U.S. have surged because of ever-increasing quantities of inappropriate materials, including wet wipes, being flushed in household and public toilets. While wastewater networks can convey solids such as human waste and small food scraps, wipes removal is uniquely challenging because they combine into "rag mats" and "ropes" and are impossible to untangle. Accumulation of these materials can cause sanitary sewer overflows, creating a public health and environmental hazard. Wastewater operators must use cutting tools and other heavy industrial tools to manually remove blockages and clogs from pumps, screens, and other equipment. These efforts increase hazardous conditions for workers and add labor and equipment costs to municipalities.

The Solution: HB 2344 will Help Inform Oregonians Regarding Correct Disposal of Wet Wipes

HB 2344 would require manufacturers or retailers to place "Do Not Flush" labels and warning statements in visible locations on packages containing most types of wet wipes. The labels will effectively inform consumers of appropriate disposal of wet wipes after use. HB 2344 is consistent with the INDA/EDANA Code of Practice 2nd edition (published 2018).

This international standard was agreed upon by both product manufacturers and wastewater services sector trade organizations.



Example of acceptable "Do Not Flush" logo on the front side (right) of the packaging.

"Do Not Flush" logo included in the INDA/EDANA Code of Practice 2nd edition. The COP delineates symbol size and location on the front side of packaging.



Operators take sewage pumps out of service and use hand tools to remove clogs.

Why Action in Oregon is Needed Now

Wet wipes cause or contribute to blockages resulting in sewer backups, overflows, and costly damage to pumps and wastewater treatment equipment in small towns and large cities throughout Oregon. A recent study conducted by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies determined the cost for Oregon municipalities to manage wipes is \$5 million annually (statewide), or an average of \$30,000 annually for each municipality. These costs don't factor in the costs of enforcement and third-party legal actions related to overflows.

Paper and fibrous materials must rapidly break down (disintegrate) to protect both consumers' pipes and public wastewater systems. While some wipes products are marked "flushable," the vast majority (about 90%) of wipes products in Oregon retail stores are not intended or even marketed for flushing in a toilet.

There are no state or federal laws or regulations¹ currently in force that require effective marking and labeling packages to inform

consumers to "Do Not Flush" personal care and household cleaning wet wipes. Wipes manufacturers and their U.S. industry trade association, INDA, have set voluntary standards for "Do Not Flush" labeling on consumer packages. However, the labels on many packages containing baby wipes and other non-flushable wet wipes do not conform to INDA's



City of Bend: Pumps of All Sizes Clog with Wipes Flushed Down Toilets

voluntary standard, leading to inconsistent messaging to consumers regarding the flushability of disposable wipes.

Wastewater agencies across the state have worked hard to educate the public about the problems created when disposable wipes are flushed. COVID-19 has increased the use and disposal of wipes, which has made the situation worse. Local governments have invested significant resources to

change the public's behaviors, encouraging the public to dispose of wipes in the trash. Billing inserts like **Toilets are Not Trash Cans**, social media posts, radio and television outreach are all elements of a significant outreach effort undertaken over the past year. Unfortunately, these efforts have not successfully reduced volumes of flushed wipes in the sewer system. **Precise and clear information on wipes packaging informing consumers to "Do Not Flush" is needed now.**



Roseburg Urban Sanitary Authority: There are no easy methods or tools for removing non-flushable wipes from sewage pumps.

¹The Washington Legislature passed a wipes labeling bill, EHSB 2565, set to be effective July 1, 2022.