

DIGITAL PROOF

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Non-flushable wipes with “Do Not Flush” symbol go in the trash, not the toilet



(BPT) - If you have a pack or two of wet wipes around the house, you know how convenient and helpful these household items can be. However, baby wipes, makeup wipes, and disinfecting wipes are classified as non-flushable products. Wet wipes make life easier when pressed for time but if consumers don't dispose of non-flushable wipes properly, it can lead to serious problems for local and state infrastructures.

According to a survey by [The Responsible Flushing Alliance \(RFA\)](#), 93% of California consumers feel that practicing responsible flushing habits is somewhat or very important to their local community. However, the data also found that many Californians falsely believe it's safe to flush baby wipes (26%), disinfecting wipes (17%) and makeup wipes (18%). Even among those who are aware, 60% admitted to flushing something they knew wasn't flushable within the last year.

"When you look at the data, we see there is a clear disconnect between perception and reality," said RFA President Lara Wyss. "When the wrong things are flushed, it can cause massive problems in the form of clogs and fatbergs in California communities and home pipes."

Downstream damage

It's easy to think that flushing a non-flushable wipe every once in a while isn't a big deal, but even one can cause issues downstream. Non-flushable wipes represent 93% of wet wipes in the U.S. and are made of long, often synthetic fibers, making them durable for their intended uses. While this benefits consumers, their durability means they aren't designed to disintegrate when flushed, blocking home or sewage pipes, pumps and wastewater equipment.

Clogs aren't just inconvenient; they're costly. [The National Association of Clean Water Agencies \(NACWA\)](#) estimates that flushing non-flushable wet wipes costs \$441 million a year in additional operating costs for U.S. clean water utilities. Also, on the municipal level, the average utility pays about \$100,000 a year in additional collection system operating costs because of issues caused by flushed wet wipes.

California is leading the charge

While these facts are discouraging, consumers do have the power to make a difference. To raise consumer awareness and encourage Californians to dispose of non-flushable wipes properly, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the Proper Labeling for Wet Wipes law in October 2021. This law requires non-flushable wipes packaging to include the "Do Not Flush" (DNF) symbol. Washington, Illinois, and Oregon have similar laws as well.

While the law is fairly new, the RFA survey found a growing consumer awareness of the DNF symbol, with 75% of Californians claiming they recall seeing it on wet wipe packaging. More importantly, most Californians (68%) are willing to change their behavior after learning about the costs of improper flushing.

Ultimately, educating the public about the consequences of improper flushing to their wallets, community, and environment is critical to reducing fatbergs and clogs across California and beyond.

"We know consumer education works; we've seen that in our 2022 pilot #FlushSmart campaign," Wyss said. "It's just a matter of connecting with audiences on the issue in a way that hits close to home, making sure we're getting the message out to as many people as we can."

Everyone can do their part to stop the wastewater issues caused by inappropriately flushed items like non-flushable wipes by always looking for the "Do Not Flush" symbol. To find educational resources on the subject and learn more about RFA, visit [FlushSmart.org](https://flushsmart.org) or check out @FlushSmart on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).