



## TCPUD “What Not To Put Down Your Toilet or Drains” Frequently Asked Questions

Flushing the toilet and draining the sink should be a simple thing, but if you put the wrong things in it, you may have an ugly mess to deal with and quite possibly some very expensive repair costs as well. Here are some tips put together by the Tahoe City Public Utility District (District) on how to avoid an expensive plumbing bill and the headaches of a big mess to clean up!

### **Q: What types of waste or household items should or should not be disposed of in the sewer system?**

Only bodily wastes, and single-ply toilet paper should go into the toilet and then into the sewer system. Soap residue from dishwashers, kitchen and bathroom sinks, showers, bathtubs and washing machines can also go into the sewer system.

Things that should NEVER be put into the sewer system include:

- “Flushable” Wipes – these are not actually flushable
- Dryer sheets
- Paper Towels
- Cooking oils, cooking fat, cooking grease
- Food and food waste, including:
  - Egg shells
  - Coffee Grounds
  - Lemon Peels
  - Vegetable Trimmings
  - Meat Scraps
  - Leftovers
- Cigarettes
- Cotton swabs and cotton balls
- Diapers
- Feminine hygiene products of any sort (including sanitary napkins and tampons)
- Hair, human or pet
- Vitamins or medicines
  - Expired or unused prescription drugs can be disposed of at the Placer County Sheriff’s Office, 2501 N. Lake Blvd., Tahoe City, CA, (530) 581-6301
  - <http://www.tfwdd.com/rx-drug-abuse-prevention.php>
- “Disposable” toilet wipes and bowl brush heads
- Condoms
- Dental floss
- Insects
- Kitty litter
- Dirt, rocks, pebbles, or sand
- Oils
- Flammable or toxic liquids/substances
- Acidic substances or liquids
- Paint
- Clothing materials
- Any other solid which may impede flow in the sewer lines.



**Did you know?**

- Many items are falsely advertised as “flushable”. Remember, toilets are made for toilet paper and human waste **ONLY**.
- Dental floss is not biodegradable and can quickly lead to clogs as it can easily snag on rough pipes.
- Dryer sheets are commonly flushed down the toilet, but they belong in the trash. Not only are dryer sheets full of toxic chemicals, but they can quickly lead to clogs. Better to not use them, but if you do use them, don’t flush them!
- If you flush a cigarette down a toilet, it never breaks down.
- Two-thirds of all sewer backups occur in the homeowner’s (your) sewer line rather than the District’s sewer mains. Sewer backups are frequently caused by things that were flushed down the homeowner’s (your) toilets or ground up in the garbage disposal.
- By watching what you put down the toilet, you’ll save money, time and help the environment! Flushing the wrong thing down the toilet damages your household plumbing, the environment and the sewer treatment system.

**Q: What is FOG?**

FOG is the acronym used to collectively refer to Fats, Oils and Grease. FOG can be defined as, “Any substance such as a vegetable or animal product that is used in, or is a byproduct of, the cooking or food preparation process, and that turns or may turn viscous or solidifies with a change in temperature or other conditions.”



**Q: Why is FOG control necessary? Why should FOG not be put into the sewer system?**

Fats, Oils, and Grease can gather in the sewer system causing blockage of sewer flows, resulting in sanitary sewer overflows. The California State Water Resources Control Board requires sewer utilities to develop and enforce a FOG control program to help prevent these types of sewer spills. District Utility Department staff members’ time is frequently spent using costly hydraulic equipment to remove built-up grease from the sewer system.

**Q: How does FOG from residences cause sewer spills?**

When wastewater from residential kitchens contains grease, the hot water and soap used in washing dishes emulsifies (breaks up) the grease, allowing it to flow freely through the sewer. As the wastewater cools, the grease congeals (hardens) causing blockages, which can lead to backups and overflows of sewage. Regardless of whether the blockage occurs within your residential plumbing, your sewer line, or the District’s sewer main, a costly and environmentally damaging sewer spill or backup may occur within your home or outdoors.

**Q: How do I keep FOG from going down the drain?**

There are some simple ways to deal with FOG used or generated during cooking. Drain excess grease and oil from cooking into a used or empty glass jar or metal can. If not full, save the can in the refrigerator or freezer for the next time, or simply throw the container into the garbage. For pots, pans and dishes, dry wipe them with a paper towel prior to rinsing, washing, or placing in the dishwasher. The paper towel can then be thrown into the garbage. These procedures will greatly reduce the amount of FOG that you discharge into the sewer system.



Additionally, you can stop by the District's Administrative Office on Fairway Drive to pick up your FREE reusable cooking grease and oil disposal container, complete with directions and heat-resistant liners to use instead of a glass jar or metal can.

**Q: What are Kitchen Best Management Practices?**

Also known as "Kitchen BMPs," these are practices, procedures and maintenance activities performed by commercial establishments and residential customers to reduce FOG in the wastewater discharge. They include:

- Collecting all cooking grease and liquid oil from pots, pans and fryers in covered grease and oil containers for recycling or disposal
  - Get your FREE reusable cooking grease and oil disposal container at the District's Administrative Office on Fairway Drive
- Scraping or dry-wiping excess food and FOG from dishes, pots, pans and fryers into the garbage
- Installing drain screens on all kitchen sink drains



**Q: Can I use chemical or biological agents to reduce FOG?**

No; the use of chemical and/or biological agents to dissolve FOG is not allowed. These additives simply move the grease into the sewer system; they don't actually eliminate it. If you have been using these materials, you must discontinue their use. Contact the District to learn about alternative grease control measures.

**For more information:**

- Visit our website, at <http://www.tcpud.org/>
- View the District's Sewer Ordinance at <http://www.tcpud.org/download/general/ord255.pdf>
- For any other questions, contact Phillip Tapia, Construction Inspector II at (530) 580-6046 or via email at [ptapia@tcpud.org](mailto:ptapia@tcpud.org).
- Compliance Services Division Phone: (530) 580-6281
- Main Office Phone: (530) 583-3796

Fax: (530) 583-1475

- Stop by our office:
  - Tahoe City Public Utility District
  - 221 Fairway Drive
  - Tahoe City, CA 96145