

# Don't Flush That!

As a member of the Sustainable Marshfield Committee we receive reports from the various departments of the City government describing their sustainability initiatives. Several months ago Sam Warp, Director of the Marshfield Wastewater Utility made a presentation to our Committee. Sam described the problems that the sewer collection and treatment system has in dealing with the things people decide to flush down the toilet. Thus began the basis for this article.

We all take our wastewater system for granted. You don't have to spend too much time in other countries to realize how well our system works. It's really out of sight and out of mind but our wastewater disposal system is not as robust as we might assume. There are things that cause big problems so with a little more research I compiled this list of **"things you should never flush down the toilet"**.

1. **Bathroom wipes** – although they may be marketed as being able to be flushed they don't break down in the treatment plant and they clog pumps and screens.
2. **Condoms** – they may seem too small to cause problems but they can be like kryptonite to sewer systems and treatment plants causing massive clogs
3. **Cotton balls & swabs** – it would seem that these are made of cotton and should breakdown but they don't and they can really plug things up.
4. **Prescription Medications** – our waste treatment plants are not designed to deal with these compounds. Antibiotics are showing up in fish populations so take them to drug disposal locations like the Marshfield Police Department.
5. **Paper towels** – single use paper products are really poor use of our forest resources but if you must, don't flush them! They're made to be strong and they last a long time.
6. **Cigarette butts** – they have some amazing toxic chemicals and non-biodegradable fibers and you're using a lot of water to get one down the pipe.
7. **Band-aids** - these are made of non-biodegradable plastic and cause big clogs in the pipes.
8. **Dental floss** – this stuff is also non-biodegradable and wraps itself around other debris in the pipes to cause 'super clogs'
9. **Fats, oil and grease** – I know we have all done it, but this stuff can clog up your own plumbing before it even gets out to the street and it really can plug things up downstream.
10. **Disposable diapers** – its amazing how many people try this but if you can get it down the drain it immediately swells up and clogs up everything behind it.
11. **Facial tissues** – This is the one that I couldn't believe but those Puffs and Kleenexes are really as strong as advertised and cause some major maintenance issues.

If you want more info check out: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/11-things-you-should-never-flush-down-the-toilet.html#ixzz2jsnCWMd5>

Randy D. Lueth, is a member of the Sustainable Marshfield Committee. You can reach him at [RLueth@RL-LA.com](mailto:RLueth@RL-LA.com)