

Keep the **WIPES OUT!**

Toilets
are **NOT**
trashcans.



Moments with your baby are precious

Baby wipes are convenient and save time, until they cause inconvenient and costly plumbing issues in your home and community's sanitary sewer system due to clogged pipes and sewage backups.

Wipes of all types can make family clean ups a snap. Just remember to dispose of baby wipes in the trash along with surface cleaning wipes, paper towels, cotton balls and swabs.



NACWA
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 **Water Environment
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the water quality people™

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 **WATER
ENVIRONMENT
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Message from WES is simple: no wipes in pipes

By Ellen Spitaleri

When it comes to deciding what to flush down the toilet, Scott Herdener has this advice: “Stick to the three P’s: pee, poo and toilet paper.”

He added, “Wipes have to go in the trash.”

Herdener, a wastewater operator at Clackamas County Water Environment Services Tri-City Facility on Agnes Avenue in Oregon City, said that the problem with wipes is that they will not disintegrate in water, so they damage pumps, pipes and other equipment at wastewater facilities, resulting in expensive repair and replacement of equipment.

First, Herdener noted, no wipes are flushable, even if the packaging says so.

“Those wipes have sat in their packaging for months, yet when you pull them out they are wet. If they don’t disintegrate while being removed from the package that is a good indication they will not disintegrate when flushed,” he said.

“Some wipes contain plastic in their weave, and when they get a little beat up they release microplastics that are not going to be removed by the treatment process,” he said. Those microplastics can be harmful to fish and other aquatic life, he added.

Who is to blame for this situation?

“People in the industry would say manufacturers, marketing, and the failure of the government to crack down on marketing,” Herdener said.

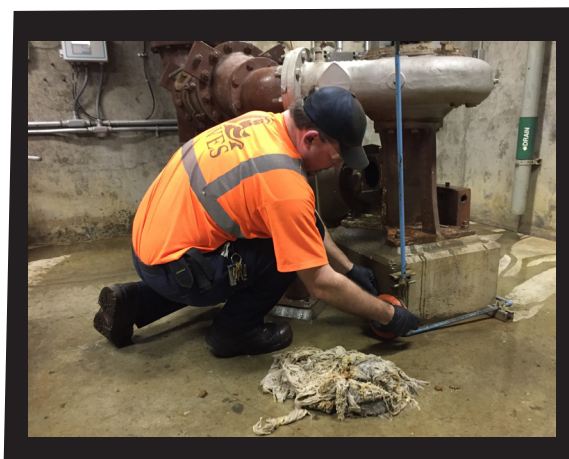
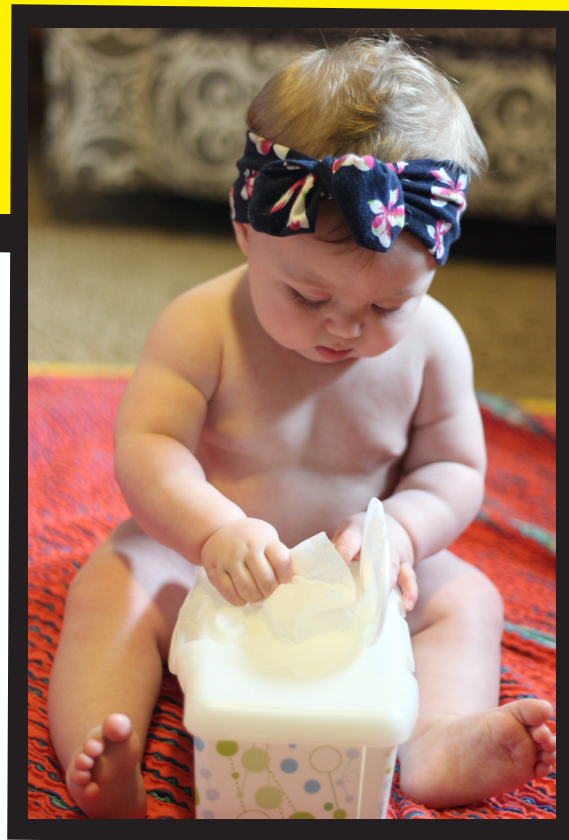
“Wipes are convenient and comfortable, and we are far removed from a time when humans had to be concerned with the disposal of their own waste.”

He added, “We take it for granted, and when the wipes damage these facilities they damage the community’s front line of defense against disease and pollution.”

It is important to educate the public about the harm that comes from flushing wipes down the toilet. Some people already know this, he said, adding, “People with their own septic systems don’t flush wipes; people with RV’s don’t flush wipes.”

When consumers flush a wipe, it travels through their plumbing and lateral sewage line to the main sewer line and then heads downstream, traveling through a network of pipes and pump stations on their way to the wastewater treatment facility.

Once at the pump station, wipes clog the pump station equipment, resulting in greatly increased maintenance and potential pump failure.



“We had to spend a great deal of money to get new powered pumps because the Willamette Pump Station could not go three days without being clogged,” Herdener said.

But the solution is simple, he noted: don’t flush wipes – any kind of wipe.

**For more information about WES,
visit clackamas.us/wes.**