



The City of Florence, as a member of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), wants what you want: a clean water utility that is thriving, innovative and engaged with the community. But as the clean water landscape evolves, truly achieving that goal requires staying current with as well as shaping national policy developments.

One of these areas is NAWCA's Toilets Are Not Trashcans campaign. This program is focused on protecting the pipes, pumps, plants, and personnel of wastewater utilities across the nation by reducing the materials that are inappropriately flushed or drained into the sewer system.

Products such as wipes, paper towels and feminine hygiene products should not be flushed, but often are, causing problems for utilities that amount to **billions of dollars** nationally in maintenance and repair costs—costs which ultimately are passed on to the consumer. Other consumer products contain ingredients, such as plastic microbeads and triclosan, which may harm water quality and the environment. Fats, oils and greases (FOG) and unused pharmaceuticals should also be kept out of the sewer system.

NACWA is working collaboratively with other groups to find common ground and safe solutions for both utilities and the environment. The Association is advocating for the elimination of harmful products and ingredients whenever possible, and for public education about safe and proper disposal practices.

NACWA is a member of the [International Water Services Flushability Group](#) (IWSFG), a group of water associations, utilities, and professionals seeking to protect wastewater systems by providing clear guidance on what should and should not be flushed. The IWSFG has released a [Flushability Specification](#)



Photo courtesy of  
City of Vancouver

that may be used to evaluate whether a product can be considered flushable or not. The final IWSFG flushability specifications, released on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and signed by over 250 water organizations worldwide, that to be flushable a product must (1) break into small pieces quickly; (2) not be buoyant; and (3) not contain plastic or regenerated cellulose but only contain materials which will readily degrade in a range of natural environments. Products that meet the IWSFG

flushability specifications are unlikely to cause harm to wastewater conveyance systems or treatment plants. The IWSFG has more information on their website including a [video](#) showing what happens when non-flushable materials end up in the sewer system.

Here in Florence, in addition to 'flushables', grease, cornstarch, packing peanuts, cleaners and even blue jeans have been found blocking lines and clogging pumps. Tissues and wipes of all types get balled up with


hair and grease in the city’s pipes, creating clogs that can be a potential nightmare for homeowners and Public Works crews alike. The problem has gotten worse in recent years with the introduction of wipes and brushes designed to disappear down toilets, said City of Florence Public Works Director Mike Miller.

Products such as Charmin Fresh Mates and Cottonelle Fresh Flushable Moist Wipes promise consumers a “shower-fresh” feeling with the convenience of flushability. Miller said, however, these wipes don’t break down the way toilet paper does in the city’s pipes.

“Just because a product says you can flush it, doesn’t mean you should,” said Miller, “Wastewater collection systems are at risk of overflows caused by these materials that don’t degrade like their manufacturers claim they do.”

These supposedly flushable wipes have become so popular, sewer systems across the country have been experiencing problems with clogged pipes. In response, wastewater agencies have been working to get the word out about the damage caused by these products.

“Damage to the sewer lines and pump stations can be expensive to tax-payers and homeowners,” said Miller, who emphasizes that toilets are not garbage cans. “The only things that should be flushed down a toilet are pee, poop and toilet paper.”

<b>What Not to Flush (or put down the garbage disposal or drain)</b>		
<b>Personal Care Products</b>	<b>Medical Supplies</b>	<b>Household Trash</b>
Baby wipes	Hypodermic needles	Cat litter
Bandages and wrappers	Medications	Chemicals and solvents
Condoms and wrappers	Vitamins	Cigarette butts
Cotton balls and swabs	Supplements	Coffee grounds
Dental floss		Disposable mop and duster heads
Diapers		Fruit stickers
Facial tissue		Fat, cooking oil, grease
Feminine hygiene products		Paint
Moist bathroom wipes		Paper towels