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MEDIA RELEASE

April 3, 2020

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Treat your plumbing right and avoid a sewer backup

Louisville, KY — The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a shortage of toilet paper as folks buy more than they need. Unfortunately, when people flush inappropriate items, it causes big problems for MSD's sewer system and wastewater treatment process – and it affects plumbing in homes and businesses, too. So-called “flushable” wipes are a problem for MSD every day, but the recent toilet paper shortage seems to be causing a jump in those backups. On a typical day, MSD would see about 8-9 backups. Now, we are seeing 14-15 residential sewer backups a day.

Marc Thomas, MSD Collections System Director, says, “Wipes do not break down, even if their labels read ‘flushable.’ They twist becoming stronger in a mass—blocking sewer lines and damaging pumps.” Wipes cause about 60 percent of the clogs that MSD employees must repair daily.

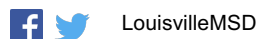
Ways to avoid a sewer backup

MSD urges residents only to flush the “three Ps—pee, poo and toilet paper. You can help prevent a sewer backup into your home by tossing your wipes, dental floss, hair, paper towels, tissues, and anything that is not one of the “three Ps—pee, poo and toilet paper—into the trash, not the toilet. If you do experience a sewer backup, make MSD your first call at 502.540.6000. If the problem is in our system, we will fix it at no charge to you.

Background

Every day, Louisville MSD receives more than 150 million gallons of water and waste that are flushed down drains and toilets across the city. Our job is to treat that wastewater and return it to local waterways and the Ohio River – protecting our environment and the health and safety of all Louisville-area residents.

MSD maintains more than 3,300 miles of sewer lines. There are pumps used to push the wastewater along its route to one of our five water quality treatment centers. Wipes and other items such as dental floss and hair can clog pumps in the collection system pipes and at the treatment centers. These clogs can cause backups into homes and businesses and are time-consuming and costly to repair.



About MSD

The Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) works to achieve and maintain clean, environmentally safe waterways for a healthy and vibrant community. The organization's more than 650 employees provide wastewater management, drainage and flood protection services across the 376 square miles of Louisville Metro. In addition to operating and maintaining Louisville Metro's sewer system, floodwall system, water quality treatment centers and flood pumping stations, MSD invests in hundreds of infrastructure improvement projects each year, plants more than 1,000 trees and other vegetation annually to enhance water filtration and reduce runoff, and provides numerous outreach programs to inform and educate the community about protecting our waterways.