

# NON-FLUSHABLES COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

## *Communications Guidance for Non-Flushables/Wipes Education and Outreach*

### **PURPOSE:**

Wipes don't break down when flushed. Many wipes labeled "flushable" when flushed will clog pipelines, pumps and cause sewage overflows in residences and the environment. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when we are encouraged to disinfect environments to prevent the spread of the virus, wastewater operators are concerned that there could be an increase in wipes use. The EPA and other national organizations as well as statewide and local wastewater agencies are working to get the message out to avoid costly as well as environmental impacts of wipes in our sewer and treatment systems.

There is urgency in getting this message out now, especially as there has been a higher demand for disinfecting wipes, baby wipes and toilet paper. While wipes/non-flushable education has been a priority for our industry, this is an especially important time to educate the public, businesses, and officials on this important information and create behavior changes as we anticipate great use of wipes in this time.

### **ENGAGEMENT GOALS:**

The primary goal of outreach, especially led by local water/wastewater agencies, is to provide education and improve awareness of the fact that many wipes are inappropriately labeled as flushable and should not be flushed. This outreach should help to change behaviors to reduce wipes in our wastewater systems.

### **AUDIENCES:**

Elected officials  
General public  
Commissions  
Large business / industry  
Healthcare providers  
First responders  
Media  
Water/Wastewater Employees

### **KEY MESSAGES:**

- **ONLY Toilet Paper Goes in Your Toilet!** All wipes, facial tissues ('kleenex'), paper towels, napkins and feminine products should be thrown in the garbage and not the toilet.
- Toilet paper is designed to break down and dissolve. All other paper products are made of sturdy, non-woven fibers that don't break down like toilet paper and cause costly impacts to our wastewater systems, environment and sewer backups at residences.

## Non-Flushable Communication Toolkit

- Many wipes, even ones that are labeled “flushable” clog sewer lines, pumps stations, increase utility maintenance, and create environmental concerns through backups in residences and/or the environment.
- “Do Not Flush” labeling and disposal instructions on packaging for wipes NOT intended for flushing (i.e. baby wipes, cleaning wipes) are widely inconsistent among brands (Ryerson 2019).
- Even if a wipe breaks apart into fragments, the microscopic long fibers are not removed in wastewater.
- Only flush the 3Ps: “poo, pee, and toilet paper.”
- Clogs from wipes cause equipment damage, costing ratepayers millions, and compromise the safety of our wastewater treatment plant operators.

### TOOLS/ASSETS:

- [Wipes Clog Pipes](#) — direct mail postcard (pdf)
- [The Toilet is Not a Trash Can](#) — billing insert fact card (pdf)
- Social media content – ranging from [news articles](#) to [fun videos](#) and [informational images](#). Great idea to follow [NEORS](#)D’s Twitter account who is the leader in humor and educational posts.

*For your own efforts, consider utilizing these items to convey the message to your constituents and audiences that will be engaging and persuasive.*

- Website content (please use any of the content on our site)
- Photos (for social media and print materials)
- Graphics (feel free to use what you see on our site, including the image above)