



SEWER OVERFLOWS 101

The main cause of sanitary sewer overflows in Houston is clogged pipes from fats, oils, and grease poured down sinks and wipes flushed down toilets.

These items block our wastewater lines and cause overflows into our streets and homes that harm our environment and health.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOW?

A sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) is a release of raw sewage that can pollute our waterways and even back-up into homes. This often results in property damage and threatens public health.

WHAT CAUSES SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS?

The main cause of sanitary sewer overflows in Houston is clogged pipes from fats, oils, and grease poured down sinks and wipes flushed down toilets. These items build up in wastewater lines, causing blockages and overflows.

HOW CAN SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS BE PREVENTED?

Put grease in its place - the trash. You can contain it in a jar, can, or heat resistant bag, cool it in the fridge or freezer, and once full, toss it in the trash. Also, only flush the Three P's - pee, poo, and (toilet) paper - down the toilet.

WHAT ABOUT FLUSHABLE WIPES?

Unfortunately, wipes labeled as "flushable" still harm our wastewater system and should not be flushed. The same goes for facial tissues and paper towels. These items do not break down, and together with grease cause blockages and overflows.



WHAT DOES HOUSTON PUBLIC WORKS DO TO PREVENT SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS?

Houston Public Works routinely repairs and clears wastewater lines as ongoing preventative maintenance in areas with high levels of sewer overflows. However, without the community's help to prevent clogs, this problem will only continue.

WHAT DO I DO WITH GREASE?

Put grease in its place - the trash. Grease can also be reused or recycled at Houston's Environmental Service Centers.

LEARN MORE AT ProtectOurPipes.org

PREVENTING SEWER OVERFLOWS

Help keep fats, oils, grease, and other items from going down the drain.

DO'S & DON'TS

DO KEEP FATS, OILS, AND GREASE OUT OF THE DRAIN

Pour, Cool & Toss – or Reuse!



POUR

Scrape or pour grease into an empty container, such as a heat resistant bag, glass jar, or tin can.



COOL

Cover the grease and let it cool. Store in the fridge until the container is full.



TOSS

Once full, toss the container in the trash.

Or Recycle It at an Environmental Service Center

Environmental Service Center South

11500 S Post Oak Road
Tuesday & Wednesday, 9AM to 3PM
2nd Saturday of each month, 9AM to 1PM

Environmental Service Center North

5614 Neches Street
2nd Thursday of each month, 9AM to 3PM

DO USE A SINK STRAINER

Use a sink strainer to prevent food scraps, hair, and other items from going down the drain.

DO USE A PAPER TOWEL

Use a paper towel to wipe grease from pots, pans, plates, and utensils before washing. Throw the paper towel in the trash.

DO YOUR TOILET DUTY

Only flush the 3 P's



PEE

Pee is treated at our wastewater treatment plants.



POO

Poo breaks down and doesn't clog our wastewater pipes.



PAPER

Toilet paper easily dissolves in water.



DO NOT PUT THE FOLLOWING DOWN THE DRAIN OR TOILET

- Cooking Grease & Oil:
 - Meat Fats
 - Mayonnaise, Salad Dressings, and Other Sauces
 - Butter, Yogurt, and Cream
- Chewing Gum
- Coffee Grounds and/or Filters
- Paper Towels
- All Wipes and Rags – Even Flushables
- Dental Floss
- Diapers
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Q-tips or Cotton Balls
- Hair
- Plastics
- Medicines and Pharmaceuticals
- Toys
- Condoms