

“Wipes in the Pipes”





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Wipes in the pipes snarling sewers

Kirsti Marohn, USA TODAY

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(Photo: Kimm Anderson, St. Cloud Times)

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ST. CLOUD, Minn. -- They are touted as disposable and even flushable, but disinfecting wipes are causing headaches for operators of city sewer systems.

The products appeal to consumers in part because of manufacturers' claims that they can be conveniently flushed down the toilet. But their cloth-like material doesn't break down in the sanitary sewer system like toilet paper and can block sewer lines, clog equipment and increase cities' maintenance and repair costs.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

NACWA's Involvement with Wipes

- 2008 – First email from a utility about problem
 - 2009 – Issue raised in several sources:
 - Emails from two NACWA members
 - Pretreatment Coordinators Yahoo Group
 - 2009 – NACWA surveys members to determine extent of problem
 - 2010 – NACWA and WEF set up joint workgroup
- 

NACWA's Involvement with Wipes

- 2012 – APWA organizes meeting with Costco
- 2013 – NACWA/WEF members review INDA draft 3rd Edition Flushability Guidelines; NACWA comments on draft
- 2013 – WEF webinar with 600 registrants
- July 25, 2013 – NACWA, WEF, APWA, and INDA have face-to-face meeting



Wastewater/INDA Technical Workgroup



- Focusing on flushability issue
- INDA, NACWA, WEF (Water Environment Federations), and APWA (American Public Works Association)
- Six representatives from wastewater, six from INDA
- Three in-person meetings, countless conference calls, concluding in August



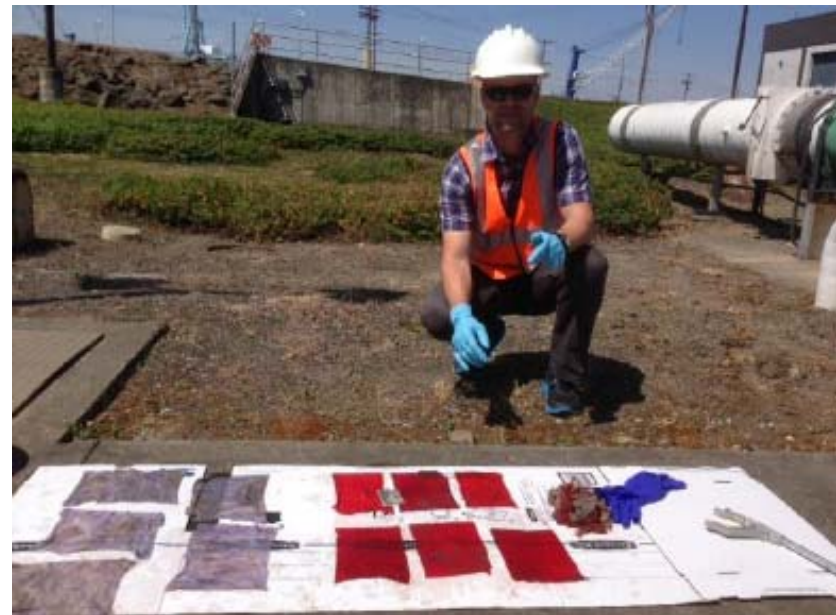
City of Vancouver Field Tests

45 Minutes in Sewer



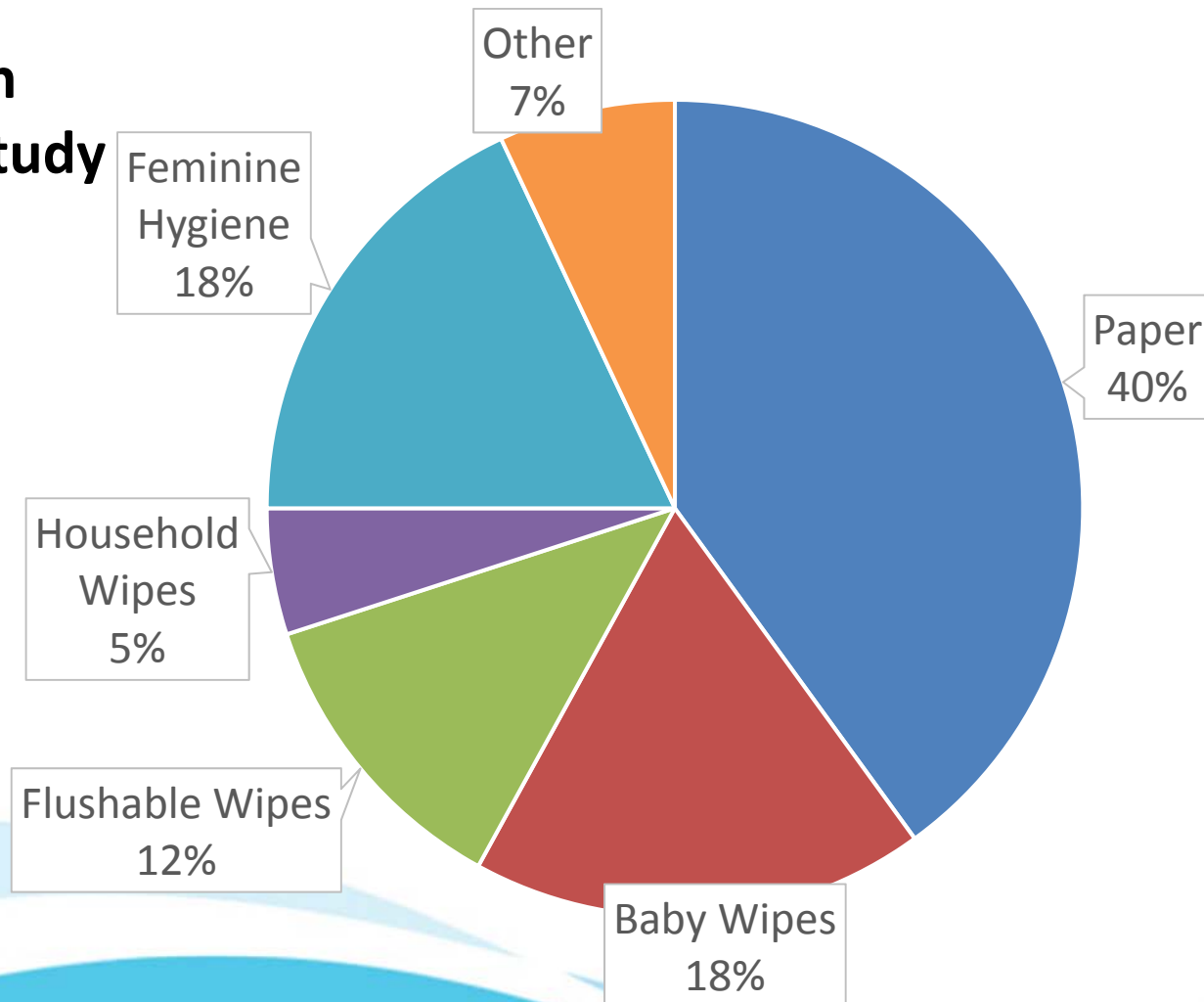
Blue = Baby Wipes

Red = “Flushable” Wipes

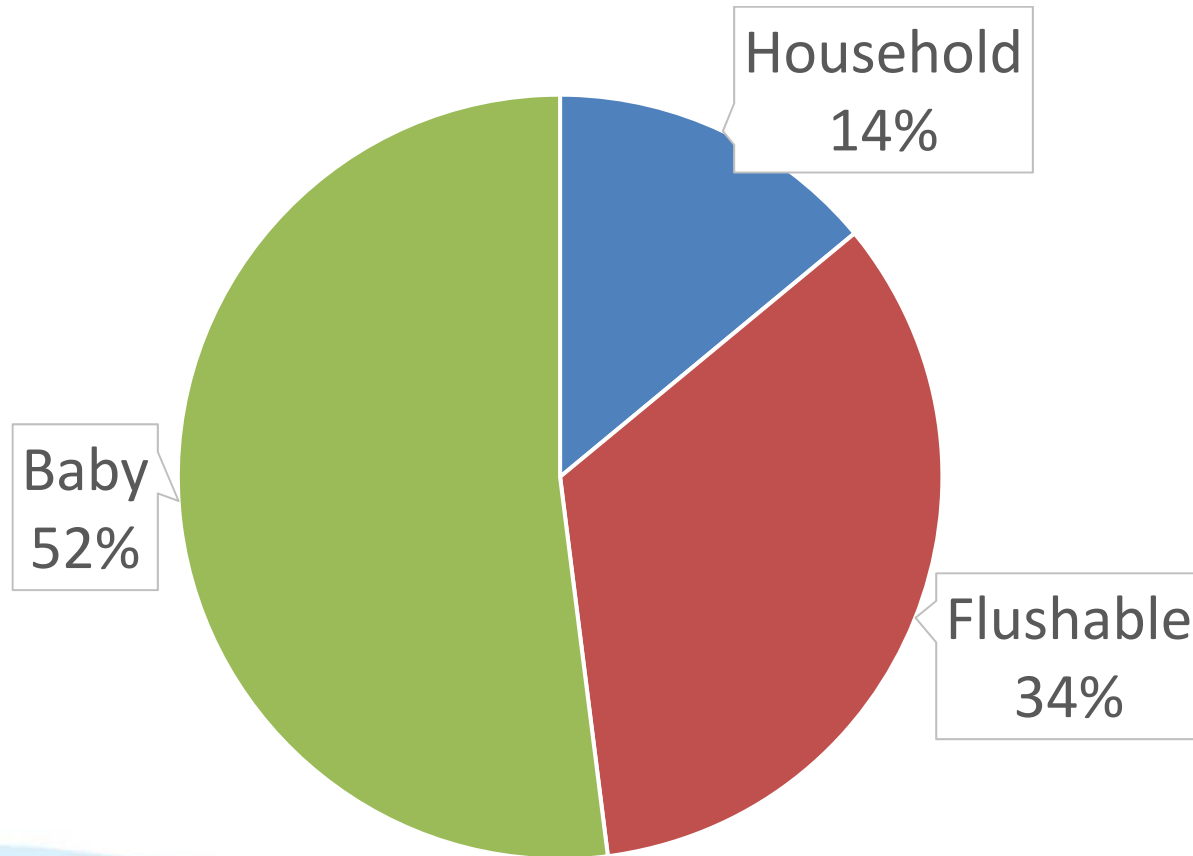


“Flushable Wipes Clogging Pipes”?

Maine Collection System Study



Wipes in Maine Collection System Study



Toilets Are Not Trash Cans!

NACWA Campaign to Protect Our Pipes,
Pumps, Plants, & Personnel



Solutions... Starting with Wipes

- Wipes are the only products specifically labeled as flushable
- Expanding wipes market coinciding with increasing sewer problems
- Consumer confusion – which wipes are flushable and which are not?
- Improved labeling could be very effective



Improved Labeling



Maine Consumer Education Pilot

“Save Your Pipes: Don’t Flush Baby Wipes”



www.SaveYourPipes.org

King County: “Flushing Awesome!”

www.flushingawesome.com




Flushing Awesome!

Want to protect the environment and keep our sewers working right? It's simple!

- Use a trash can instead of the toilet to dispose of used wipes, hygiene products and other items that don't break down like toilet paper.
- Even if the label says “flushable”, wipes and other trash can build up in the sewer system and cause overflows that might damage property, hurt the environment, or make people sick.
- Human waste and toilet paper are the only things to flush. Everything else belongs in the trash can – not the toilet!

NACWA Resource Page

www.nacwa.org/flushables



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Flushable Wipes and Other Non-Dispersible Products




This collection of materials on "flushable" wipes and other products that may not disperse in the sewer system is being used by NACWA, the American Public Works Association (APWA), and the Water Environment Federation (WEF) in conversations with retailers and manufacturers of these products. NACWA members and other wastewater utilities may also find these useful in their efforts to reduce the problems caused by these products.

Do you have materials to add to this page? If so, please send them to Cynthia Finley at cfinley@nacwa.org.

What You Can Do To Help

Does your utility have problems with wipes and other non-dispersible products, and would you like to help with our national advocacy efforts? If so, please take photos of

Upcoming Events

- [Summer Conference & 44th Annual Meeting](#)
July 13 – 16, 2014
[The Nines](#)  Portland, OR

Join a Committee

- [Sign-up Form](#) 