



Don't Believe Everything You Read: "Flushable" Wipes Shouldn't be Flushed!

Ask any 4-year-old: there are a lot of things that can be flushed down the toilet—crayons, golf balls, broccoli...

But just because something *can* be flushed down the toilet, doesn't mean it *should*. Such is the case for so-called "flushable" wipes. These wet wipes, are causing major problems for sewer systems across the world, including right here in Seattle. Unlike toilet paper, which is made to break down when flushed, most wipes are made of materials designed to remain intact in water—including some plastics. They can get stuck in sewer pipes, ultimately creating clogs, causing backups, and damaging our shared sewer system.



"People see the word 'flushable' on a pack of wet wipes, and assume it is safe to flush them down the toilet," says Seattle Public Utilities' Rachel Garrett, a program manager for wastewater education and outreach. "The problem is, those wipes can get stuck in the sewer line, leading to clogs and sewage backups. This can be pretty disruptive and expensive for residents and businesses."

Even if these wipes make it through your home plumbing, they can cause huge clogs in the city's sewer system, requiring extensive repairs and sending sewage into streets, basements, and local waterways.

"Wipes are a huge problem for our 60+ pump stations and 1200+ miles of pipe. Our crews regularly remove wipes from pipes and equipment but they can't be everywhere," says Ray Bernardez, director of SPU's System Maintenance Division. "If we don't catch a clog, it can lead to sewer overflows into peoples' homes, onto streets, and into local waters like Lake Washington and Puget Sound."



Wipes cause major blockages in Seattle's sewer system, like this pile of wipes clogging a pump station in SE Seattle.

You can help: toss wipes in the trash

The good news is, there's a simple solution to this wipe/pipe problem: if wet wipes are part of your bathroom routine, make sure you dispose of them by tossing them in the trash! Your pipes will thank you and you'll be doing your part to help ensure the health of our city sewer system and our waterways.

Snow/Ice Collection Delays

During the winter season, icy roads may prevent SPU's contracted haulers from collecting garbage, recycling, or food/yard waste. Collection trucks can weigh up to 30 tons and cannot safely navigate icy streets the same way our cars can.

In the case of severe weather, there are several places to go to find out whether your solid waste collection has been postponed:

- Website: seattle.gov/utilities
- Twitter: [@SeattleSPU](https://twitter.com/SeattleSPU)
- Blog: atyourservice.seattle.gov
- Recycle It App: seattle.gov/recycleit
- AlertSeattle: alert.seattle.gov

We'll also communicate via local media and other local online platforms.

Winter Weekends at the Cedar River Watershed

The Cedar River Watershed Education Center in North Bend, WA offers **FREE** Winter Weekend Programs for the whole family this January-March.

Join a naturalist for a 2-mile Winter Adventure Hike or Discover Walk, attend a Haiku Writing Workshop, or enjoy some cozy fireside storytime.

Learn more and register by going to www.seattle.gov/utilities/crwee and clicking on Watershed Tours and Programs.



Public Garbage & Recycling Cans Get a Makeover

You're probably familiar with Seattle's public place garbage and recycling cans—blue and black metal containers placed along sidewalks in areas with high pedestrian traffic. Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) has placed more than 800 of these cans in neighborhoods throughout the city to help keep our streets clean and make recycling available for people on the go.

SPU contractors work hard to keep public cans clean and in good condition—cans are serviced anywhere from three to 14 times per week. Unfortunately, in some areas cans have been subject to damage, theft, garbage contaminating the recycling, and overflows. That's why SPU has begun replacing existing public place garbage and recycling cans with new and improved cans as part of a pilot program to reduce contamination in public recycling, reduce the number of damaged containers, and improve the overall cleanliness of Seattle's streets.



The new cans feature different sized openings (large for garbage, small and round for recycling), attached lids, and anti-graffiti paint. We're rolling out them out in the following business districts:

- The International District
- Beacon Hill
- Madrona
- West Seattle
- The University District

Keep an eye out for more new cans in 2020!

You can help prevent contamination of public recycling.

If you're putting recyclables in public recycling cans, make sure they're clean, dry, and empty. If they're dirty, toss them in the garbage.

Contact Us

24/7 Emergency Services

(e.g. urgent flooding, hydrant leaks)

- (206) 386-1800

Report Problems

(e.g. graffiti, illegal dumping, needles)

- www.seattle.gov/utilities
- www.seattle.gov/finditfixitapp
- (206) 684-7587

Customer Service

- www.seattle.gov/utilities
- www.seattle.gov/utilities/EmailUs
- (206) 684-3000 Mon-Fri, 7:30am-6pm

SPU Customer Survey

We want to hear from you!

We want your feedback about Seattle's drinking water, garbage/recycling/compost, drainage, and sewer services.

You input helps us improve our services, prioritize investments, and make plans for the future.

Take our brief (3-5 minute) survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/SPU_survey.

For interpretation services please call 206-684-3000.

如需口譯服務請電 206-684-3000。

통역 서비스를 원하시면 206-684-3000 번으로 전화해 주십시오.

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Para servicios de traducción, por favor, llame al 206-684-3000.

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Muốn yêu cầu dịch vụ thông dịch xin gọi số 206-684-3000.

\$AVE

Emergency Bill Assistance

Qualifying for SPU's Emergency Assistance Program Just Got Easier!

If you're having trouble paying your bill, you may be eligible for emergency assistance.

SPU has recently increased the amount of emergency assistance customers can receive to help pay their bill (up to \$424) and made it easier to qualify.

To learn more and see if you qualify, go to www.seattle.gov/mybill and click on "emergency assistance" or call (206) 684-5800.

Utility Discount Program

Is your household income at or below 70% of the state median income? You may be eligible to get a discount of 50% on your Seattle Public Utilities bill and 60% on your Seattle City Light bill through the City of Seattle's Utility Discount Program.

Learn more: www.seattle.gov/mybill or call 206-684-0268.

\$100 Toilet Rebates

Save water and money by replacing your old toilet. Customers who replace a toilet installed before 2004 with a new Premium toilet may qualify for a \$100 rebate!

Learn more: www.savingwater.org or call 206-684-7283.

Auto Leaks Workshop

Oil and other auto fluids that leak from your car can end up in our local waterways. Join SPU for a **FREE** Auto Leaks Workshop. You'll have your car inspected, learn to find and fix leaks, and get a free maintenance check kit.

Register for upcoming workshops at www.seattle.gov/utilities/autoleaks.

