Common sense shouldn’t go down the drain

Common sense sometimes takes a brief break when it comes to materials that make their way into the sewer system. It’s amazing what some people flush.

Some things can trash your pipes, the City’s pipes, damage treatment plant equipment and make meeting wastewater treatment requirements more difficult. The result is money out of your pocket, directly or indirectly.

**Bottom line:** If it’s large, solid and isn’t biodegradable, don’t flush it. Here are some items that should not go down the drain.

- Tampons
- Disposable diapers
- Feminine pads
- Men or mist pads
- Wipes of any kind
- Unusual medications
- Beverage wrappers
- Cigarettes
- Cotton wads
- Cotton balls
- Paper and cardboard
- Hair (in large amounts)
- Small toys
- Razor blades
- Headliner
- Oil
- Jesus
- Kitty litter
- Coffee grounds
- Egg shells
- Pesticides
- Insecticides
- Flour
- Ammonia
- Explosive liquids

**Leaving your house**

Plumbing fixtures are located within your house, all the drains from your sinks and toilets funnel down to a main outlet in the basement or below your house. A pipe, usually 4 inches in diameter, carries the wastewater 12 inches or more below ground out to the street where it connects to the City’s line, usually about 8 inches in diam-

**Heading toward treatment**
The City’s main sewer lines that run under streets are like the branches of a tree. The thinner 6-inch lines collect the wastewater from hundreds of buildings, converging with other main lines and flowing into larger pipes. The pipe continues to con-

**Pre-Treatment**
The settling wastewater flows through screens and grinders to remove the solids that have arrived - eggs, rice, corn, me-

**Preliminary Treatment**
The settling wastewater first encounters the flows through screens and grinders to remove the solids that have arrived - eggs, rice, corn, mis-

**Primary Treatment**
Next, the water flows into large, open concrete-veined clarification basins. During the 3-hour visit there, more material will settle to the bottom of the tank while lighter material and non-water soluble li-

**Secondary Treatment**
The cleaning process continues with the water entering aeration basins. It is exposed to hungry bacteria that digest and remove the unwanted organic pollutants. This biological process greatly accelerates the breakdown of the pollutants. After 8-10 hours of reaction, the mixture of bacteria and wastewater flow into two more settling clarifying basins. Eventually the bacteria used to digest the pollutants becomes sludge. A skimmer on the top of the tank skims off the floating materials and liquids and then those materials also go to the digester.

**UV Disinfection**
At this point, the water has become pretty clean, having spent 6-8 hours going through the various processes. Remember, “This is Wastewater 101” – just because it’s easy to simplify (in the final step, the water flows down a concrete chan-

**Wastewater Treatment Plant**
600 S. Boise Ave.