

OYSTER BAY WATER & SEWER COMPANY, INC.
MAINTENANCE TIPS ON OUR COMMUNITY SEWER SYSTEM
AND INDIVIDUAL SEPTIC SYSTEMS

September 18, 2019

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We may not often think about our community sewer system or individual septic system until there is a problem. But there are a number of things that all homeowners can do to help prevent problems, reduce the need for expensive repairs and prolong the useful life of our community sewer system and individual septic systems. This article is intended to help increase awareness and encourage best practices that will support these goals for our community.

OUTDOORS:

- Be aware that ground water from heavy rains and localized flooding that are so common here on Chincoteague Island must not be allowed to find its way into the community sewer system or individual septic systems. When this occurs it can overwhelm the system, leading to costly repairs. Some of the most vulnerable areas are missing or damaged clean-out lines and any damaged sewer lines or fittings.
- If you have a clean-out line on your lot, make sure it is properly capped and in good shape. A missing or damaged four-inch PVC cap can be replaced for less than \$10, can be purchased at any hardware store and can be installed in minutes. You do not need to glue the cap onto the vertical PVC line as long as it fits snugly.
- Protect the capped clean-out from the lawnmower and never park over your clean-out line (or over your individual septic system or sand mound).



IN THE WHOLE HOUSE:

- Practice common sense water conservation to reduce the amount of water going into the community sewer system or into your individual septic system:
- Promptly repair any dripping faucets, showerheads or leaking toilets. Don't think that any plumbing issue will somehow fix itself if simply ignored.
- Properly dispose of leftover household hazardous chemicals such as cleaners, bleach, disinfectants, pesticides, also paints, paint thinners, stains and varnishes and construction materials such as caulk, plaster, spackle, grout, adhesives and sealants. Follow label directions, and NEVER pour these chemicals into toilets or sink, tub or shower drains, even in very small amounts. These chemicals can cause serious damage to the sewer system or to your individual septic system.

IN THE BATHROOM:

- Avoid long showers and reduce the shower water pressure. You can achieve better shower pressure while reducing water use by replacing your older showerhead with a newer type, which you can purchase inexpensively at any hardware store or on-line and can install yourself in minutes with only a pair of pliers.

- REMEMBER THAT THE ONLY THINGS THAT SHOULD GO DOWN THE TOILET ARE HUMAN WASTE AND TOILET PAPER.

- Make sure that you have a proper waste basket in the bathroom and use the waste basket (not the toilet) for such items as dental floss, dental picks, disposable diapers, facial tissue, sanitary wipes, medicated pads, feminine napkins, condoms, cotton balls, q-tips, cotton swabs, gauze, band-aids, toilet scrubbing pads, toilet deodorant dispensers, dryer sheets and pretty much anything made of plastic. These items do not decompose and lead to blockages in sewer lines.
- Safely and properly dispose of medical sharps such as syringes and lancets (never in the toilet).
- It may be a good idea to try to keep the toilet seat lid closed to prevent items from being accidentally dropped into the toilet, such as children's toys, jewelry and clothing items. Keeping the lid down may also reduce the temptation to throw other waste items that have been mentioned here into the toilet.

IN THE KITCHEN:

- Properly dispose of leftover cooking oils, bacon fat, grease and similar items that may clog your drains and/or sewer lines, especially as they cool. These oils and greases will not decompose and can prevent the sewer system from working properly and efficiently. If your pots and pans are just oily or greasy, consider not rinsing them in the sink but instead wiping them out with a paper towel, which you then dispose of in the garbage, never in the toilet.
- Chill any used kitchen grease in the fridge if required to harden it up for disposal in the regular weekly curbside trash. For oils and greases that do not solidify, pour them into a sealable jar or other container for disposal. Again, never pour these greases or oils down the sink or toilet. Please note that the local Accomack County Recycling Center is not presently equipped to accept waste kitchen oil or grease.
- Limit the amount of milk products you pour down the drain. While not directly related to stoppages, milk creates a high oxygen demand to decompose.
- Use the kitchen waste receptacle (not the toilet or drain) for such items as coffee grounds, tea bags, leftover food or table scraps. Please remember that garbage disposals are not permitted in those homes serviced by the community sewer system.

IF YOU RENT YOUR HOME TO OTHERS:

- Consider posting tactful reminders to your guests, especially in the bathroom and kitchen, for example that the only things that should go into the toilet are human waste and toilet paper. You may also want to make sure that your rental agency knows and understands your "house rules".

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION!

Please be aware and attentive to unusual noises, smells, leaks, alarms etc. that may be related to the community sewer system and contact the Plant Manager if you have any concerns or if you think there is a problem. Contact information for the plant manager can be found in the Oyster Bay Water & Sewer Directory.

https://ob2poa.org/WaterSewer/WSPrivate/OB_WS2019CustomerDirectoryRev5a07052019.pdf

DRAINS:

- Avoid the release of hair into drains to prevent clogs in traps and drains.



- Use basket type strainers at the kitchen and bathroom sinks, tub and shower drains and dispose of the collected material in the regular garbage.



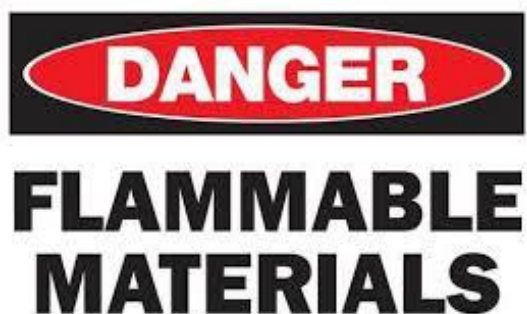
- Use an ashtray or butt can for cigarette and cigar butts, not the toilet. These items may clog your drains and/or sewer lines, especially over time, and cigarette filters just do not decompose.

- Use a toilet plunger to clear any ordinary clogs in the toilet or sink, shower or tub drain lines. The next step before calling a plumber is to use a mechanical "snake" or auger to clear a clog. But do not use harsh chemicals in your drain lines. These chemicals do not work very well on clogs, and can cause problems if it becomes necessary later to run a power auger ("Roto-Rooter") through the clogged line.



- **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER** dispose of gasoline, motor oil, brake fluid, kerosene, lighter fluid or other flammable or explosive liquids, even in tiny amounts, in the toilet or in any drains. And never attempt to burn these liquids.

- The local Accomack County Recycling Center has good information on the safe and proper disposal of these liquids and can accept certain liquids for recycling.



IN THE LAUNDRY:

- Run your washing machine with a full load whenever possible.

- Use the manufacturer's recommended amount of detergent in your washing machine. It has been reported that the average household uses three times more detergent than the various manufacturers recommended for washing dishes and clothes.

Clothes do not get any cleaner with excessive detergent, and too much detergent can harm fabrics. When these detergents enter the sewer system, they hold large amounts of fats, oils, and grease in suspension making the treatment of the wastewater more difficult and more costly. In addition to saving money on buying detergents and preventing problems at the sewer plant, reduced use of detergents is good for the environment.



- Materials such as used dryer sheets and dryer lint go in the trash, not in the toilet.

- When the time comes for replacing or installing new plumbing fixtures, such as toilets, faucets and showerheads, or appliances that use water, such as washing machines and dishwashers, consider that the newer type fixtures and appliances use less water. Many of the newer appliances also have improved energy efficiency.

PET LITTER:

- Properly dispose of kitty litter and other pet litter and never pour it into the toilet. Most of these products do not decompose easily and can cause back-ups in your sewer lines, resulting in very costly repair bills. There are some good tips to be found "on-line" about how to deal with kitty litter and other pet litter.