The Public Advised to *NOT* Flush Disinfecting Wipes, Paper Towels down Toilet – Throw Them Away instead

State's Wastewater Treatment Plants May get Overwhelmed, Consumers may face In-home Plumbing backups and Blockages

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SACRAMENTO – While the State Water Board and other public agencies encourage Californians to follow the Centers for Disease Control recommendations to clean surfaces with disinfecting wipes to reduce the spread of COVID-19, **it is important to discard those items in the trash, not the toilet**.

Flushing wipes, paper towels and similar products down toilets will clog sewers and cause backups and overflows at wastewater treatment facilities, creating an additional public health risk in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Even wipes labeled "flushable" will clog pipes and interfere with sewage collection and treatment throughout the state.

Wastewater treatment facilities around the state already are reporting issues with their sewer management collection systems. These facilities are asking state residents to not discard wipes in the toilet, but instead to throw them in the trash to avoid backups and overflow. A majority of urban centers are on centralized sewage collection systems depend on gravity and enough water flow to move along human waste and biodegrable toilet paper. The systems were not designed for individual nylon wipes and paper towels. The wipes and paper towels do not break down like toilet paper, and therefore clog systems very quickly.

Wipes are among the leading causes of sewer system backups, impacting sewer system and treatment plant pumps and treatment systems. Many spills go to our lakes, rivers, and oceans where they have broad ranging impacts on public-health and the environment. Preventing sewer spills is important, especially during this COVID-19 emergency, for the protection of public health and the environment.

Please do not flush disinfectant wipes or paper towels down the toilet.

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