

Fats, Oils & Grease (FOG)

In the south, a large portion of social gatherings require food whether the occasion is a celebration or mourning the loss of a loved one. This usually involves time spent in the kitchen preparing an ensemble of dishes for those we love the most to enjoy. While most of us enjoy consuming these wonderful dishes, very few enjoy the part that comes afterwards.... the cleanup. We at the CCWSA would like to speak to this topic in particular just to educate you (our customers) on the issue of Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG).

For starters, it is an old myth that hot grease is safe go down the sink as long as you run hot water with it. While this effectively removes the hot sticky substance from your sink, it does not clear them from your pipes. Grease is a viscous material that is a liquid when hot and a solid when cool. This ability to change from a liquid to a solid is especially bad for sewerage lines in that it sticks to the nooks and crannies in the pipes as well as to objects that don't belong there such as flushable wipes. We recommend pouring the liquid grease into a disposable container and then putting it in the trash. Solids that remain on the pan should be scraped into the trash and then anything that remains should be wiped with a paper towel and disposed of as well. An additional recommendation we have is to have a sink strainer in place when cleaning your remaining dishes. Similar to the grease, the concept of "out of sight, out of mind" is the wrong mentality to have with putting inappropriate items in your sewer lines. Once these particles leave your sink they slowdown in the pipes and if enough builds up they can contribute to a blockage as well.

The general public doesn't usually have any difficulty with identifying what grease is and its responsible disposal is more of a minor inconvenience. The broader issue of FOG encompasses more than just the usual things that come to mind such as bacon grease or the grease left over from cooking a hamburger. Things like mayonnaise, canola oil, olive oil, dairy products, salad dressings, and peanut butter are all included in FOG. A popular misconception is that dairy products such as ice-cream or milk will not contribute to a clog as well. Instead, consider pouring spoiled milk or freezer burnt ice-cream in a remote spot in your yard. Yard disposal would also be a good idea for vegetable scraps that might otherwise lead to a stinky trash bag. Another strategy your family might think about implementing is changing the way you shop for groceries. For instance, if you typically only consume ½ gallon of milk before it spoils consider only buying ½ gallon so you have less waste. Most of us are also guilty of opening several salad dressings at one time, sometimes duplicates of the same dressing and letting them sit until they go bad. Consider opening one or two at a time instead of multiples.

You may be wondering, "How does this affect me?" Since FOG sticks to the walls of sewer pipes and accumulate over time, eventually your pipes will become clogged completely causing sewage to back up into your home. In the event your home is tied onto our sewerage lines your FOG has the ability to affect everyone in your local area. FOG sticks to "flushable" wipes creating what is known as "fatbergs". These "fatbergs" clog our sewerage lines preventing the flow from traveling to our pump station and filling up the manholes upstream of the clog. When the volume exceeds what the manhole can contain it spills out, usually directly or indirectly (storm drain) entering the closest waterway. When sewage instead of stormwater enters these waterways, it has disastrous effects on the environment. Depending on the volume that spills it can result in fish kills, sewage artifacts, eutrophication of the water during the warmer months, as well as a lingering stench in the area. Unfortunately, the problem doesn't stop with the localized area of the spill since all waterways in Cherokee County flow to the Altoona Lake.

In conclusion, being proactive about your FOG removal can be a minor inconvenience in the short term but can make a big difference when it comes to protecting your home from costly backups and the environment from avoidable spills. We ask that you take this newfound knowledge and internalize it as part of your normal clean-up/ clean out routine for FOG. We will be providing FOG scrapers at our main office at 140 West Main St. in downtown Canton on request.

***Just as a reminder - If you have a particular topic or question you would like us to address, please send it to ccwsaea@gmail.com.**