

From the Delanco Sewerage Authority

Did you invite the Fatbergs??

Now that the holidays are behind us, we're kind of curious...did you invite the Fatbergs for the holidays? Who or what are the 'Fatbergs'? We're glad you asked.

Fatbergs are actually large fat deposits that accumulate in sewer laterals, collection systems, and sewerage treatment plants (STPs); no kidding, look it up! They are so named because of the size of these deposits. Just like large icebergs threaten ocean going vessels, fatbergs are large balls of fat that impede or block the flow of our sanitary systems. So where do they come from?

Holidays are a prime cause of fatbergs; not the holidays themselves but the cooking of holiday dinners. Once everyone is stuffed with holiday turkeys, ham, pork, and beef the clean up begins. Many residents just dump the fat and cooking liquids down the kitchen sink or toilets to get rid of them. Unfortunately, as soon as these fats reach your underground pipes they solidify into globs of fat that continue to build up until it completely blocks your sewer lines. The build-up and/or blockages are not that easy to remove once they accumulate.

To make matters worse, people continue to flush wipes down the toilet. Although the wipes themselves pose significant problems with sewers when the fats and wipes combine they form an almost impenetrable fatberg that has to be mechanically removed. No amount of Drano or Liquid Plumber is going to dissolve that.

So, what can you do with all the leftover cooking fat? There are several "safe" alternatives for disposal for small quantities of fats and grease.

- Use some of the fats for making sauces and gravies for the meal. It is a delicious albeit less healthy alternative that many of our parents and grandparents used to do. Remember those bacon grease cans?
- Pour grease and fats into plastic containers and seal them before tossing them in your regular trash on trash day.
- Pour grease and fats into containers and freeze them prior to placing them in your regular trash on trash day.
- Wipe cooking pots with a paper towel prior to washing dishes to remove as much fat as possible.
- Use liquid dish detergent to dissolve some of the grease prior to washing cooking pots with the rest of your dishes. Liquid dish detergents contain saponifiers that actually convert some of the grease into soap prior to rinsing. Use about a teaspoon of detergent with about a cup of water to break down the grease. Dawn dish detergent is just one example.
- **For used cooking oil only, not fats, grease or drippings** – Residents who have used cooking oil like peanut, corn, canola, vegetable oil, commonly used in deep frying, can take the used cooking oil to the Resource Recovery Complex, 22000 Burlington-Columbus Road, Florence, NJ 08518. Drop-off is free for all Burlington County residents. Businesses must arrange for their own disposal. For more information and current hours please call (609) 499-5200.

Wipes will always pose an issue with sanitary sewers. Some wipes are far worse than others but they all create problems. Absolutely NO baby wipes, hand wipes, face cloths, "Wet-Ones", Clorox Wipes or any other disinfecting cloths. These items do not break down at all.

If you must use toilet wipes, Cottonelle and Scott make "flushable" wipes that break down better than other brands but again, its preferred that you do not flush ANY wipes down the toilet. Just because a manufacturer prints "flushable" on their product it doesn't mean it's safe for flushing down the toilet; it only means that it is capable of being flushed. Anyone with kids knows you can flush toys down the toilet but that doesn't mean you should.

So, we hope you didn't invite the Fatbergs for the holidays but if you did pour cooking fats down the drain, don't worry, the Fatbergs will visit you soon.