

What's Going Down the Drain in California?

Municipalities up and down the state have been surprised—and challenged by—the amount and variety of items that turn up in their wastewater systems. Let's take a behind-the-drains look at some of the most surprising things Californians are flushing or dumping that have ended up in catch basins and treatments plants across the state.



Regions legend

- SF
- OC
- LA

Asphalt and concrete from construction work

Lumber – 2x4" and 4x4"s in eight-foot lengths

False teeth

Live cat and live seal

Traffic cones

Discarded tires

Car parts including filters and windshield wipers

Brooms

Cell phones

Hundreds of hot dogs

Casino chips

Rags and hair

Books

Fish, frogs, turtles, snakes and eels

Baby wipes and household cleaning wipes



In a 2019 report, NACWA estimated that wipes result in nearly \$47 million a year in additional operating costs in the collection systems of California.

So what can you do?
Always look for the "Do Not Flush" symbol of wipes packaging for proper disposal instructions. If you see it, always throw it in the trash, not the toilet.

Remember, none of these should end up in your storm drains or water treatment plants – only we can make the difference, California!

Adding fats, oils, greases down in-home drains combined with wipes is a catastrophic addition that we can and must do better to avoid. Keeping our homes and communities cleaner and safer is impossible without it.

Baby wipes, makeup wipes and hard surface cleaning wipes are made with plastic fibers that don't break down in water and can cause damage to home and municipal sewage systems.