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## ***Water Treatment Officials Remind Residents to Only Flush Toilet Paper***

*Increased use of wet wipes, paper towels and napkins are stressing sewer lines*

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s Division of Water Quality, The Water Environment Association of Utah and The Wasatch Front Water Quality Council wants to remind residents of the hazards posed by flushing wet wipes, paper towels and napkins down the toilet.

The COVID-19 outbreak has resulted in residents flushing other paper products down the toilet. This has caused an increase in backed-up toilets and overflowing sewer lines in Utah and across the country. Even wipes marketed as “flushable” will clog pipes.

“It is critical that people help protect the integrity of Utah’s wastewater infrastructure during the coronavirus public health emergency,” says Erica Gaddis, Director of Utah’s Division of Water Quality. “Wet wipes, napkins and paper towels do not break down as easily as toilet paper and can clog the system. It is important that residents only flush regular toilet paper down the drain.”

Unlike toilet paper, which dissolves easily in liquids, wipes and paper towels are designed to absorb moisture. These products survive the long journey down miles of sewer pipes to sewage treatment plants. There, at the treatment plant, they clog pumps and other equipment.

“Please be aware that flushing anything other than the ‘3 Ps’ (pee, poop and toilet paper) can cause problems with sewage collection and treatment,” says Giles Demke, President of The Water Environment Association of Utah, which represents some 500 wastewater professionals. “All of our front line staff are committed to providing uninterrupted service to our customers.”

Clogged and overflowing sewers are not only a problem for residents dealing with a backed-up line in their home. Failures at sewage treatment plants can result in overflows and spills into lakes, rivers and reservoirs where the sewage can harm public health and the environment.

“Utah sewer facilities recommend begging a roll of actual toilet paper off the neighbor and spare the sewer collection and treatment systems problems,” says Jill Jones with The Wasatch Front Water Quality Council and Central Davis Sewer District. “Our employees can’t work from home and no one wants their sewers shut off, so when you think of what you can do during this stressful time, don’t forget to make it a little easier on the sewer folks, too, by restricting what you flush down your toilet.”

**About DEQ**

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) mission is to safeguard and improve Utah's air, land and water through balanced regulation. DEQ implements state and federal environmental laws and works with individuals, community groups and businesses to protect the quality of Utah's air, land and water. For more information, visit [www.deq.utah.gov](http://www.deq.utah.gov), follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](https://www.facebook.com/utahdeq)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](https://twitter.com/UtahDEQ)).