

# PREVENT SEWER BACKUPS



Sewer overflows and backups can cause health hazards, damage home interiors, and threaten the environment. An increasingly common cause of overflows is sewer pipes blocked by grease. Grease gets into the sewer from household drains as well as from poorly maintained grease traps in restaurants and other businesses.

Where does the grease come from?

A byproduct of cooking, grease comes from meat fats, lard, cooking oil, shortening, butter or margarine, food scraps, baking goods, sauces and dairy products.

Too often, grease is washed into the plumbing system, usually through the kitchen sink. **Running hot water afterward will not prevent problems.** Grease sticks to the insides of sewer pipes (both on your property and in the streets). Over time, it can build up and block the entire pipe.

Home garbage disposals do not keep grease out of the plumbing system. Commercial products, such as detergents, that claim to dissolve grease may pass grease down the line and cause problems in other areas.

## THE RESULTS CAN BE:

- ▶ Raw sewage overflowing in your home or your neighbor's home
- ▶ An expensive and unpleasant cleanup that often must be paid for by you, the home or business owner
- ▶ Raw sewage overflowing into parks, yards, and streets
- ▶ Potential contact with disease-causing organisms
- ▶ An increase in operation and maintenance costs for local sewer departments, which causes higher sewer bills for customers

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

The easiest way to solve the grease problem and help prevent overflows of raw sewage is to keep this material out of the sewer system in the first place.

- ▶ Never pour grease down sink drains or into toilets
- ▶ Never put grease down garbage disposals

- ▶ Put baskets/strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and other solids, and empty the drain baskets/strainers into the trash for disposal
- ▶ Correctly dispose of grease, oil or fat:



1. Let it cool
2. Pour into a container
3. Wipe solidified grease from pans and utensils and place in your trash
4. Dispose of cooled solidified grease, oil or fat into your trash



- ▶ Put baskets/strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and other solids, and empty the drain baskets/strainers into the trash for disposal
- ▶ Speak with your friends and neighbors about the problem of grease in the sewer system and how to keep it out

**RESTAURANT AND BUILDING OWNERS:** For a grease trap to work correctly, it must be properly:

- ▶ **DESIGNED** (sized and manufactured to handle the amount that is expected)
- ▶ **INSTALLED** (level, vented, etc.)
- ▶ **MAINTAINED** (cleaned and serviced on a frequent basis)

Solids should never be put into grease traps. Routine, often daily, maintenance of grease traps is needed to ensure that they properly reduce or prevent blockages. The use of enzymes applied manually in a sink drain or automatically fed to the grease trap is **highly recommended** to break down grease and reduce the grease burden. Be cautious of chemicals and additives (including soaps and detergents) that claim to dissolve grease - some of these additives simply pass grease down pipes where it can clog the sewer lines in another area.

For more information, contact the Department of Public Works at (609) 799-8370.

**WEST WINDSOR HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
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