

Top 10 Items to Keep Out of Your Drain



Commissioner and Board President Matt Breysse.

This summer, my wife and I were graciously invited to a friend's cabin on a lake. The first morning there, our host offered to make coffee, and proceeded to open the coffee filter and dump the old grounds

into the sink. I stopped him, explaining that coffee grounds can cause major problems for the sewer line. He said he had no idea and wished he had known before. This started a longer discussion about what should not be put down the drain or flushed down the toilet.

Northshore Utility District maintains the public sewer system, but as homeowners, we are responsible for the private sewer lines on our property. Many of us, like my friend, may not be aware that what we flush down the drain or toilet can cause expensive sewer backups and even damage the environment. As a commissioner for Northshore Utility District, I thought I would share here the top ten things you should never flush, along with some best practices to protect your sewer line.

- 1. Grease:** Cooking oil, butter, salad dressing, mayonnaise, and other oil-based products stick to pipes, causing them to become clogged. To keep grease out of your drain, scrape and wipe your dishes before washing, avoid using garbage disposals, and pour used cooking oils into a can to trash or recycle.
- 2. Coffee Grounds:** Plumbers say they are the most common cause of drain problems.
- 3. Flour:** Flour coagulates when mixed with water. This will build up in your pipes and cause clogging.

- 4. Egg Shells:** The sharp edges of the shell will collect other things coming down the drain, eventually causing a clog.
- 5. Cleaning Products:** Although they are liquid, cleaning products should never be poured down the drain because they contain harmful chemicals.
- 6. Flushable Wipes:** "Flushable" wipes are not really flushable. They don't break down properly and often get caught on other things, creating larger clots in pipes.
- 7. Medications:** Dumping medications down the drain means that they can be leaked back into your drinking water and the environment. Safe disposal sites set up across King County will take your old or expired medications
- 8. Paper Products:** The only paper product that should go down you drain is toilet paper. Toilet paper is designed to disintegrate in water while other paper products will not.
- 9. Expandable Foods:** Pasta and rice are two foods to watch out for because they expand when mixed with water.
- 10. Produce Stickers:** Those little stickers don't dissolve in water and can clog your pipes and block screens and filters.

When in doubt, consider the following: if it isn't water, human waste, or toilet paper—put it in the trash, not down the drain or toilet. This can help protect both your home and our environment from the hazard of sewer backups.

You can find more tips for protecting your sewer from backups and other common hazards, plus info on safe disposal of medicines, cleaning products, and grease at www.nud.net/prevent-backups.



Helps to Find and Fix Leaks

This year we've seen an increase in water service line breaks. We want to remind customers about available tools to help you find and fix leaks on your private water line.

Leak notification program

We read your meter remotely every two months in preparation for your bill. If the meter has recorded 24 hours of continual water flow at any point during that two-month period, it flags your account and we send you a "potential leak" notice. This alert has helped hundreds of customers address leaks quickly, rather than waiting for a gradual bill increase, or a burst pipe.

About the leak notice process:

- ▶ The meter alert doesn't tell us when the continual usage began or how much water was used.
- ▶ The most common home leaks are at toilets and on underground water lines.
- ▶ Even if you don't see a big bill increase, it's important to address leak notices right away. Small leaks will almost always become bigger problems.
- ▶ Perform a basic assessment at your meter first, before you contact a plumber. Using the meter to track the leak to inside or outside and verify how fast water is leaking will help you determine next actions. Contact (425) 398-4403 if you don't know your meter's location.

Leak troubleshooting helps

Our website has resources to help walk you through the process of checking for leaks from start to finish—including an easy-to-follow video. You can find all of these aids at www.nud.net/leaks.

Leak adjustment policy

If you are facing a big water bill from a confirmed leak, you may be eligible for a leak adjustment, a credit of some of the water overage costs. See www.nud.net/leak-adjustment for more information about the policy and process to apply.

And please contact our office any time with questions—we're always happy to help.

**Northshore
Utility District
Board of
Commissioners**

Matt Breysse,
President

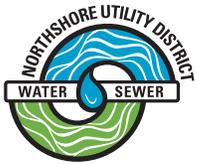
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Board of
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Meetings
are held at the
District Office
on the first and
third Monday
of each month
at 5:30 p.m.
(except holidays)



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Emergency Prep 101

SMALL STEPS TO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

September is national emergency preparedness month. Northshore Emergency Management Coalition (NEMCo) director, Carl Lunak, shares with us simple, small actions with big effects to get yourself, your home and your loved ones ready to face an emergency.

- ▶ **Keep shoes and a flashlight next to beds.** This can help you leave quickly in a fire or earthquake, and protect you from potential hazards like broken window glass.
- ▶ **Practice shutting off your utilities.** Ground movements can break natural gas and water lines. Locating your utility shut offs before the emergency can save precious time and reduce damage.
- ▶ **Establish out of area contacts.** Long distance calls will often go through when local phone lines are disrupted. *(Side note: In a major incident, texting or using social media to connect can free up lines for emergency communications.)*
- ▶ **Keep cash handy.** When a major disaster hits and phone lines are down, ATM's and credit card machines won't work.
- ▶ **Identify and prepare for special needs.** Every family has some special requirements for daily living—like pet needs, prescription meds, glasses or contacts, and infant or elderly family member needs. Identify yours and add necessary items to your emergency supplies.
- ▶ **Make copies of critical documents.** Keep copies of passports, birth certificates, address books, credit cards, and bank accounts on a portable flash drive, in the cloud, or at a relative's house in a different zip code.

- ▶ **Turn your car into a portable emergency kit.** You may likely be in or near your car when a disaster hits. Load your car with essential emergency supplies, including food, water, blankets, first aid supplies, clothes, and sturdy shoes. Keep gas in your tank at all times.
- ▶ **Store emergency water.** You already have some—ice cubes in your freezer and your hot water tank. You should store enough to provide 1 gallon per person or pet per day, ideally for 7 to 10 days, either in bottled water cases or in other prepared containers.
- ▶ **Make meal plans.** To maximize the amount of time you can get by without outside help, plan to eat perishable foods first. If you lose power, start with refrigerated items, items from the freezer, then pantry items, dried goods, and finally canned foods.
- ▶ **Stay informed.** Subscribe to emergency alerts from local and regional sources like Alert King County and Alert Northshore to get the most up to date information during a crisis.
- ▶ **Get trained.** The more self-reliant you are, the better you and your family will do in an emergency. NEMCo offers First Aid and C.P.R. classes, 4-hour emergency prep workshops, and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. Check with your city for other local training resources.

To help you in your efforts, www.nud.net/prepare has key preparedness info, including steps to shutting off your water meter, preparing your emergency water supply, and links to local emergency programs.



SUSTAINABLE GARDENING TIP Fall Leaves = Garden Gold!

Instead of raking up leaves for yard waste, why not put this great organic resource to good use?

Mulched leaves can save you the cost of commercial mulch, but they also help enrich your soil, lock in moisture, and insulate your plants from colder fall and winter temperatures. Used in your compost, the carbon in leaf mulch helps balance the nitrogen in other compost materials.

Here are a few easy ways to put leaves to work in your garden:

- ▶ Mow leaves first to shred them into usable form. This will prevent leaves from packing together, which inhibits water and air flow.

A few inches of fall leaves will help keep garden beds warm over winter, and give you better soil in spring.

- ▶ Spread a 1 to 3 inch layer around plants and trees, in flower beds, and over vegetable gardens to fertilize the soil and help hold in moisture. Bonus: it limits weed growth!
- ▶ Bag the rest for rich spring compost. You can mix 2 to 4 inches into upper soil for planting, or rake 1/4 inch into lawns. Worms and microbes love leaves—which means you'll get lighter, airier soil over time.

You can find more sustainable gardening tips for fall planting and yard care, and more water-wise landscape inspiration at www.savingwater.org.



**UPDATE YOUR
EMERGENCY
CONTACT INFO**

**Can we reach you fast
in an emergency?**

Please take 2 minutes to
share your current
emergency contact info.

Fill out the form at
[www.nud.net/
emergency-contact](http://www.nud.net/emergency-contact), or
call (425) 398-4400.