



UNDERSTANDING SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS



A sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) is any overflow, spill, release, discharge or diversion of untreated or partially treated wastewater due to an obstruction, system failure, or capacity exceedance at the wastewater facility or in the contributing collection system.

An SSO can introduce wastewater onto streets and into stormwater systems where it can impact surface waterbodies such as lakes, rivers and estuaries.



SSOs can cause wastewater to back-up in toilets, sinks and drains before it can reach a treatment facility.

By taking the proper steps, you can help to reduce the overall impact that SSOs have on the environment and local infrastructure.



FATS, OILS AND GREASE

- Fats, oils and grease thicken as they cool, coating pipes and equipment. This can lead to backups, overflows and pump failure.
- Collect oil and grease in a container and dispose of it in the trash or at an approved collection site. Never dump oil or grease down the drain.

FOOD WASTE

- Scrape grease and food scraps from dishes into the trash can or your compost pile. Avoid using the garbage disposal where possible.
- Use a strainer to catch smaller food particles that can attach to build up in pipes, tangle or expand when wet to form clogs.
- Never dump coffee grounds or flour down the drain.



TRASH AND DEBRIS

- Don't flush sanitary items, such as wipes and feminine hygiene products, which can cause an SSO clogging pipes or tangling on equipment. Even "flushable" products can increase the risk of SSOs.
- Use sink and shower drain strainers and empty them frequently. Hair, dental floss and other string-like items tangle in drains and may form a clog.

CHEMICALS, MEDICATIONS AND PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

- Don't dispose of chemicals, medications or personal care products down the drain. These products could damage equipment, endanger workers or contribute to an SSO.



POWER OUTAGES AND HEAVY RAIN

- Avoid doing laundry or using the dishwasher during heavy storms when power outages or groundwater and stormwater entering the collection system can reduce the system's capacity.
- Never connect gutter downspouts to the sanitary sewer. Consider collecting the stormwater in rain barrels for use on lawns and gardens, or in water features.
- Make sure your home's sewer cleanout cap is intact. If your home or business has a grease interceptor, or lift station, make sure the lid stays closed.
- Never remove manhole covers or sewer cleanout caps to drain flood water into the sewer system.

CRACKED OR BROKEN PIPES

- Avoid planting trees and shrubs close to sewer lines as tree roots can intrude into a sewer line and cause cracks and clogs.
- Call 811 before you dig to locate your utility lines. Be careful when digging near utility lines to avoid damage and injury.
- Avoid driving over sewer lines with heavy equipment. Additional compaction of the soil could cause the pipe to crush, crack or separate at the joint.
- If there is a lift station on your property, ensure a buffer is present to prevent damage from motorized vehicles.



GET INVOLVED!

- Work with your local utility to provide SSO outreach at your next community event.
- Check the utility's website or local newspaper for an event calendar or notices of public meetings.

WHERE CAN I REPORT SPILLS?

Keep the emergency number for your wastewater service provider on hand, or please contact the:

STATE WATCH OFFICE

1-800-320-0519

FloridaDisaster.org/dem/response/operations

REGULATORY OFFICE IN YOUR AREA

FloridaDEP.gov/districts

PROTECTING  TOGETHER

ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov