



**August 12, 2013**

## **Saving Septic**

Homes contain a huge number of consumer products for every possible purpose. We have cleaners for toilets, sinks, floors, windows, furniture, and carpet. We have microfiber cloths, antibacterial wipes, and paper towels for wiping surfaces. This is not to mention laundry soaps, fabric softeners, dryer sheets, or the many other products that we use on a daily basis in our homes.

There is no possible way for a person to research each of these products individually, so we tend to trust the packaging when it tells us it's, "eco-friendly", "green", or "Septic Safe". Unfortunately we rarely get to see the science used to test these products or know what standards products must meet, if any, to be labelled in this fashion. This column will explore the impacts of a variety of products on Private Sewage (Septic) Systems.

### **Volume 1: How Septic Safe are Flushable Wipes?**

Using the bathroom has been a human function since the dawn of man. As such, we have continually found ways to make it more and more sanitary. This evolution has brought to the forefront a relatively new product, Flushable Wipes. Made by countless brands, for various markets, these sanitary wipes seem to be the new "it" bathroom item.

Flushable wipes seem like a great addition to a person's bathroom routine, however, they may not be as perfect as they seem. The problem with flushable wipes is that their packaging advises consumers that they are sewer and septic safe. After checking a variety of sources, this seems to be untrue.

Many cities and regional districts are now issuing public announcements asking residents not to use flushable wipes. They have found that the wipes are not breaking down like toilet paper does in the water cycle of the toilet; which is creating huge issues in regional collection facilities. These issues include: clogged sewer lines, sewer backups, and blocked intakes and filters. In some locations, these issues have resulted in costs of up to \$100,000 per year.

Seeing the problem with flushable wipes in communities with big pipe allows us to consider the same risk to a home on a private septic system. Flushable wipes are more durable than toilet paper; creating more risk of clogged pipes, building up more solids in septic tanks, potentially plugging filters, and in some cases even escaping the tank and ending up in the treatment field or mound. Clearly this is an issue that has the potential to cause huge inconvenience and cost to the homeowner.

SOWMA recommends that you advise your clients of the potential risks of disposing of sanitary flushable wipes through their septic system. If they are determined to use such products, discuss the option of disposing them in a sealed trash container instead of flushing them into their septic system.

To see video footage related to the issue of flushable wipes in the wastewater environment, please watch the following clips.

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/video-hub/home--garden/bed--bath/flushable-wipes/16935265001/22783507001/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hdX3c5wgcE>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ81Xpe9rvA>

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Onsite Wastewater Practitioner Training**

|          |                           |           |
|----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Days 1—3 | January 15, 16 & 17, 2014 | Saskatoon |
| Days 4—6 | January 29, 30 & 31, 2014 | Saskatoon |

### **Site & Soils Evaluation Field Day**

September 6, 2013—Delisle, SK  
September 12, 2013—Weyburn, SK

### **System Install Field Day**

September 13, 2013—Weyburn, SK

## **SAVE THE DATE**

**CONVENTION & TRADE SHOW**  
**Saskatoon, SK**  
**MARCH 14 & 15, 2014**