

## Do Not Dispose of Sanitizing Wipes in Onsite Sewage Systems (Septic Tanks)

The current health emergency related to the COVID-19 virus has placed more emphasis on cleaning of surfaces and hands. This is one of the important ways that all of us can fight this illness. It is critical that all of us be in the fight and do everything we can to limit the spread of this vicious virus.

Many of us are using sanitary wipes to clean surfaces to great benefit to ourselves and those around us. This is a good thing, but taking care of one problem may be leading to other problems later. How we dispose of these products after use is very important. If your household or commercial wastewater treatment uses an onsite sewage system with a septic tank, these wipes should never be flushed down the toilet into the septic tank. The septic tank is an excellent method of treating wastewater but it cannot break down wipes or paper towels. In fact these or any other solid waste products create a hazard that may cause the onsite sewage system to fail. These products can plug the sewer line that leads from the house or business to the septic tank. This can result in a backup of sewage into the home. This would put residents of the home or employees at considerable risk of disease as this requires immediate cleansing. If the solid waste has been successfully delivered into the septic tank there are other problems that can develop. The solid waste will not be broken down by the microorganisms in the septic tank. They do a fine job, in most cases, of breaking down human waste and the required toilet paper but they are completely inadequate to deal with excess quantities of solid waste. This excessive solid waste continues to accumulate in the septic tank and if not removed in a timely manner, it will cause the system to require pumping to relieve the excess amount of solids and floating material. This can plug the pipes in the absorption field or cause the tank to overflow. This can result in the need for a costly repair or replacement. Hoosiers who live on onsite sewage systems are encouraged to dispose of used sanitary wipes or paper towels with other municipal solid waste to avoid these problems. With septic tanks there is no such thing as “flushable.”

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