

DON'T feed the FATBERG



What is Fatberg?

The Macomb County Fatberg is a large build-up of Fats, Oils and Grease, known in the sewer business as “FOG,” that accumulated in the North Gratiot Interceptor, a large sewer line in Clinton Township. As the Fatberg grew, other items become lodged in it, such as diaper wipes, sanitary products and related items. Remember, only waste water and toilet paper should enter the sewer.

What causes a Fatberg?

Some of the common items that can cause a fatberg are meat fats, lard, grease, cooking oil, sauces, butter, margarine, liquid from a slow cooker and food scraps.

How big is Fatberg?

The Macomb County Fatberg was about 100 feet long, 10 feet wide and as much as 6 feet tall when it was discovered and broken up. It weighed about 19 tons.

How was Fatberg removed?

Much of the fatberg had to be cut apart as it had become completely solid. Other parts were broken off using high-pressure water jets. It was a dirty and dangerous job.

How did Fatberg cause a problem?

As it grew, it increasingly impeded water flow in the sewer line. Left unchecked, this would have caused a clog that could have caused sewage to back up in to hundreds, maybe even thousands of home. These same types of clogs — smaller Fatbergs — can also happen in smaller municipal sewer lines or in residential lines. Obviously, the Fatberg had to be removed before these back-ups could occur. Removing the Macomb County Fatberg cost about \$100,000 — money that could be much better spent working on other projects or on reducing our overall budget and passing those savings on to rate payers.

What steps can I take at home to protect my pipes and prevent another Fatberg?

For residential buildings such as single family homes or condominiums, the prevention of fat, oil and grease buildup typically lies with each individual. Some best practices to avoid the gross and costly results of FOG buildup include the following:

- Wipe greasy cooking utensils with a paper towel before washing. A large amount of FOG buildup comes from washing greasy dishes.
- Minimal use of garbage disposals will help reduce blockages in your kitchen sinks from food particles combining with grease in the pipe.
- Carefully pour the used cooking oil and grease into its original container or another sealable container and throw it in the trash when cool.

What do I do if I have a mini-Fatberg in my home?

Once a fatberg forms in your home pipes, it is very difficult to eliminate and often requires a professional sewer cleaning company. Periodically pouring boiling water down drains can help loosen build up and flush out drain pipes.

What about chemical drain cleaners?

Chemical drain cleaners should be used very sparingly. They can cause two problems: 1) repeated and frequent use of these highly corrosive products can greatly accelerate the corrosion and failure of your home pipes, and 2) these chemicals are general not removed in the waste water treatment process, meaning the chemicals ultimately end up in our Great Lakes, a very unwelcome addition to our waterways.



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