



March 29, 2019

The Honorable Bill Quirk, Chair
Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee
1020 N Street, Room 171
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: AB 1672 (Bloom): Sponsor and Support

Dear Assembly Member Quirk:

The California Association of Sanitation Agencies is pleased to be sponsoring AB 1672 (Bloom), which will prescribe labeling requirements for both flushable and non-flushable wet wipes products. AB 1672 is a straightforward and important bill that seeks to provide clear consumer information about how consumers should properly dispose of single-use wet wipes products, with the intent of keeping non-dispersible wipes out of the sewer system.

In the last fifteen to twenty years, there has been a proliferation of single use wet wipe products that have come onto the retail market. These convenience driven single use products are available for a variety of applications including personal hygiene, household cleaning, baby and child care, cosmetic, and many other purposes. Most of these products are intended to be disposed of in the trash can. However, there is a growing suite of these products that are marketed as “flushable” or “sewer and septic safe.” There are currently no standards in place that a manufacturer must follow in order to make this type of claim. As a result, any company can call their product “flushable”, regardless of the potential harm to the sewer system or whether it truly breaks apart like toilet paper once it is flushed. Furthermore, the inconsistent messaging surrounding these products creates confusion about which types of wipes are acceptable to flush down the toilet, and which are not. The widespread availability of these products, coupled with the lack of consistent standards for labeling, results in many of these products being improperly flushed down the toilet.

When wet wipes products are flushed into the sewer system they can cause significant issues for private property owners, sewer collection systems, and wastewater treatment plants. Wet wipes products that do not break down can catch on tree roots or other obstructions in residential sewer laterals and cause costly and dangerous backups for property owners. Wet wipes have also been shown to cause significant damage to residential septic systems, resulting in expensive repairs and remediation for homeowners.

Further down the line, wet wipes weave together and form large “rags” that can become massive obstructions in sewer lines when they combine with other improperly flushed items and fats, oils, and greases. These obstructions are commonly referred to as “fatburgs,” and in addition to being a disgusting environmental problem, local agencies spend significant time and resources to remediate them. In the worst cases, fatburgs attributed to wipes

contribute to sanitary sewer overflows, which are a threat to public health and the environment, and result in fines and penalties to public agencies.

Treatment plants across California are far too familiar with the scourge of wet wipes being improperly flushed. Wastewater collection and treatment agencies have invested significant financial resources to upgrade their treatment infrastructure solely to install “de-raggers,” bar screens, grinders, and upgraded pump systems. Many of these upgrades are necessitated primarily by the need to manage the volume of wipes coming through the system on a daily basis. The increased maintenance costs associated with this additional infrastructure are measurable and substantial, and we anticipate that the costs, maintenance and infrastructure needs will continue to grow as the popularity of these products continues to surge.

Therefore, AB 1672 presents a straightforward solution to helping combat the problems caused by improperly flushing wet wipes. The bill prescribes clear and consistent consumer messaging for these products that indicates to consumers that either a wipe is “flushable,” or it is not. Under the provisions of AB 1672, wipes can be labeled as “flushable” if they do not cause harm to the sewer system, meaning that manufacturers can demonstrate that their wipes break down in the sewer system like dry toilet paper. For all other wipes that are not intended to be flushed, they must be conspicuously marked with “Do Not Flush” labeling.

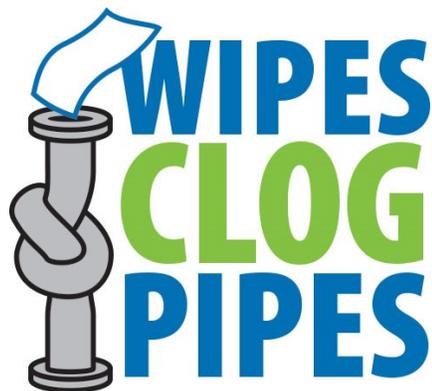
For the reasons described above, the California Association of Sanitation Agencies strongly supports AB 1672 and urges your support when the bill is heard in the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials committee.

Sincerely,



Jessica Gauger
Director of Legislative Advocacy

CC: Assembly Member Bloom
Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee



For more information about wipes and the problems that they cause, please visit www.casaweb.org/wipes



Sanitary Sewer Overflow caused by wipes blockage in Northern California



Workers demonstrate the daily maintenance issues with wipers at their treatment plants