



Why you shouldn't flush paper towels

Paper towels are tough

When you see paper towel commercials, they're always bragging about how tough they are. Heck, Brawny even uses the epitome of toughness, the lumberjack, as its mascot (or is it just a hipster...seriously, we can't tell anymore). Paper towels are designed to hold up when wet, unlike toilet paper which is designed to hold up to wetness for just a few seconds and then break apart. It's this toughness that prevents them from disintegrating no matter where they are in the water system.

Paper towels are absorbent

The other thing paper towel commercials are always bragging about is their absorbency. That's great when you've spilled a glass of iced tea on the counter, but you've got to think about what's actually happening...the paper towel is getting bigger as it absorbs water. So, when you flush a paper towel, it's growing to its maximum size and stays at that size all the way down your drain and into your house lateral sewer line. When you combine this with their toughness, it's just one big wad of dead tree fibers heading down and asking to get caught on something.

Paper towels are big

Try this: take a square of toilet paper and try to fit it through a straw. Not exactly easy, but it can be done. Now try to do the same things with the smallest paper towel you can find. Toilets were designed to handle one of these two paper products and we'll give you a hint...it wasn't the paper towel!

Despite the wonders of select-a-size, paper towels are still big and thick. Because of this they're more likely to be grabbed by whatever else is hanging out in your sewer line, stuff like tree roots and grease monsters. The paper towels are just going to sit there, not degrading, because they were designed to not degrade. Then they're going to help grab the next paper towel you send down, and then the smaller stuff like regular old toilet paper, and it's all making the problem worse and worse until you need professional roter service.

We've said it many times before, but it never ceases to amaze us how many time people ignore us: the only stuff that should go down the toilet is human waste and toilet paper (preferably a brand that disintegrates quickly). If you follow this rule, it's likely that you won't need sewer cleaning quite so soon.

- **Disposable wet wipes.** In spite of their name, these wet wipes aren't exactly meant to go down your toilet. Like paper towels, wet wipes are simply unable to break down properly, leaving behind fiber scraps that could clog your toilet.
- **Sanitary napkins.** Panty liners, pads, tampons, and the like can swell several times their size when exposed to water, so they are unsuitable for flushing.
- **Disposable gloves and other latex products.** These products aren't biodegradable, meaning they can persist inside your home septic or municipal sewer system for long periods of time.

https://youtu.be/5u-KGEH75_E Is a great link to learn more on why we ask you not to flush items other than Toilet Paper.

Thanks

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jenny Maker".

Guthrie Public Works Director