

Fat-Free Sewers: How to Prevent Fats, Oils, and Grease from Damaging Your Home and the Environment

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Fats, Oils and Grease aren't just bad for your arteries and your waist line; they're bad for sewers too.

Severe overflows and backups can cause health hazards, damage home interiors and threaten the environment. An increasingly common cause of overflows is sewer pipes blocked by grease. Grease gets into the sewer from household drains as well as from poorly maintained grease traps in restaurants and other businesses.

Where does the grease come from?

Most of us know grease as the byproduct of cooking. Too often, grease is washed into the plumbing system, usually through the kitchen sink. Grease sticks to the insides of sewer pipes (both on your property and in the streets). Over time grease can build up and block the entire pipe. The results can be:

- Raw sewage overflowing in you home or your neighbor's home.
- An expensive and unpleasant cleanup that must be paid for by you, the homeowner.
- Raw sewage overflowing into parks, playgrounds, yards, and streets.
- Potential contact with disease causing organisms, and
- An increase in operation and maintenance costs for the Borough's Water and Sewer Department and the Atlantic Highlands/Highlands Regional Sewer Authority.

What we can do to help?

The easiest way to solve the grease problems and help prevent overflows of raw sewage is to keep this material out of the sewer system in the first place.

1. Never pour grease down sink drains or into toilets.
2. Scrape grease and food scraps from trays, plates, pots, pans, utensils, and grills and cooking surfaces into a can or the trash for disposal.
3. Do not put grease down garbage disposals. Put baskets/strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and other solids, and empty the drain baskets/strainers into the trash for disposal.
4. Speak with your friends and neighbors about the problem of grease in the sewer system and how to keep it out.

What restaurant and building owners need to know about grease traps or interceptors.

Restaurants, large buildings (such as apartment complexes and high rise apartments/condos), and other commercial establishments may have grease traps or interceptors that keep grease out of the sewer system. For a grease trap or interceptor to work correctly, it must be properly designed, installed and maintained. Solids should never be put into grease traps or interceptors. Routine, often daily, maintenance of grease traps and interceptors is needed to ensure that they properly reduce or prevent blockages. Be cautious of chemicals and additives (including soaps and detergents) that claim to dissolve grease.

Remember, fines can be imposed if it is found that your grease traps are not adequately designed and maintained.