



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wipes Do Not Belong In Pipes

City urges residents to consider the consequences of flushing wipes and help prevent avoidable and costly damages

The City of McAllen is calling on residents to stop flushing wipes and other non-flushable items down the toilet. Products labeled “flushable” can still cause serious problems in the wastewater system, contributing to blockages, equipment damage and costly repairs that can be prevented with proper disposal.

Unlike toilet paper, wipes do not break down as quickly in wastewater systems. They can collect inside pipes, become entangled with other debris and interfere with pumps and other equipment. Flushing wipes is not a harmless habit. It creates preventable problems that require time, labor and public resources to address.

The impact on McAllen’s wastewater system is significant. During fiscal year 2025–2026, the City recorded 320 wipe-related calls and spent an average of \$15,230.50 on pump repairs associated with seal failures caused by wipes and similar debris. Crews also remove accumulated wipes from lift stations approximately 10 times each month to keep wastewater flowing.

“Keeping wipes out of the toilet is a small action that can make a big difference for McAllen,” said Mark Vega, General Manager of McAllen Public Utility. “When wipes enter our wastewater system, they can cause blockages and damage equipment, forcing our crews to spend valuable time responding to preventable problems instead of focusing on routine maintenance. Those repairs require additional labor and resources, and repeated issues can make it more challenging to keep the entire system operating as it should. We are asking residents to do their part by disposing of wipes in the trash. It’s a simple step that helps prevent unnecessary damage and protects an essential service our community relies on every day.”

Residents must take responsibility for what goes down their drains. The rule is simple: If it isn’t toilet paper, don’t flush it. Even products labeled “flushable” must go in the trash. Wipes are not the only items causing problems in McAllen’s wastewater system. Dental floss, rubber gloves, contraceptives and feminine hygiene products, have also contributed to blockages and interfered with wastewater equipment. Other items that should never be flushed include diapers, paper towels, cotton swabs, cotton balls, makeup wipes and disinfecting wipes. Residents should only flush toilet paper and human waste to help prevent avoidable damage and protect the community’s wastewater infrastructure.

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“McAllen’s wastewater system is critical infrastructure that serves our entire community, and we all have a responsibility to protect it,” said City Manager Isaac J. Tawil. “Maintaining this system is an ongoing responsibility, and preventable problems make that job more difficult than it needs to be. Protecting it begins with understanding that not everything can be flushed. Wipes, including those labeled ‘flushable,’ should always be disposed of in the trash. I encourage residents to share this message with their families and make proper disposal a household habit. Together, we can prevent avoidable damage and help safeguard this essential service for the entire community.”

The City of McAllen encourages local businesses to join the effort by displaying educational signage featuring their own logos to help raise awareness, prevent improper disposal of wipes, and protect our community’s wastewater infrastructure.

For more information about protecting McAllen’s wastewater system, visit [McAllen Public Utility – Wastewater Systems](#).

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About the City of McAllen

Founded in 1904 and incorporated in 1911, the City of McAllen has grown from a small agricultural community into one of the most vibrant and fastest-growing cities along the U.S.–Mexico border. Known as the “City of Palms,” McAllen serves as a hub for international trade, retail, tourism, and culture in the Rio Grande Valley. Today, the city employs more than 2,600 dedicated public servants across 41 departments, delivering essential services to a community of more than 150,000 residents. McAllen city leaders remain committed to transparent governance, fiscal responsibility, and enhancing quality of life through innovation, infrastructure, and community engagement. For more information, visit www.mcallen.net and follow us on social media @cityofmcallen