

LIFE

Don't pour these things down your sink!

There's only so much that your garbage disposal can incinerate.



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Published: 5:13 PM CST February 22, 2019
Updated: 6:40 PM CST February 22, 2019



EDINA, Minn. — There's no question that garbage disposals are great but there are some problems they just simply can't fix.

"That historical knowledge that our grandparents knew to scrape the grease into the coffee can has just gone away," Edina Public Works Director Dave Goergen said. "And people think garbage disposal means it takes care of everything."

That coffee can trick is generational wisdom for a good reason. Goergen says during his 10-year-tenure, he's seen far too many nasty images.

"We'll see grease waterfalls where it looks like a frozen waterfall," Goergen said. "Imagine Minnehaha falls...but hardened grease."

It may sound like common sense, but Goergen says that's not necessarily true. Only this past November, did the city of Edina officially pass an ordinance banning people from pouring "any waters or wastes containing fats, wax, grease, or oils" down the drain.

"A restaurant in town that we were monitoring was dumping a fair amount of grease down and causing some plugs," Goergen said. He added that with all the labor and cost of materials together, that problem took \$30,000 to fix.

Everything from bacon to butter to oil-based salad dressings, mayonnaise, gravy, meat chunks and wax can gum up the pipes. Even pasta water or any other kind of starchy water can exacerbate the problem.

"Even things like rinsing heavy starches from pastas will bind with that grease as well," Goergen said. "When it cools, it hardens and can potentially clog the sewer."

And no one really wants to have the conversation that follows the clog.

"You shake your head and go knock on the door," Goergen said.

Ultimately, it's about playing your part in protecting your city's arteries. If your sewer is backing up and no amount of draining chemicals work, Goergen says it's best to call the city. At least in Edina and in Minneapolis, an inspection is free to figure out where the problem is.

If the issue lies with the city, the city will take care of fixing the pipes. However, if the cause leads back to your household, that cost will be your responsibility.

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