

Turkey Day Trouble: Holiday Fatberg Flushing Costs American Taxpayers Thousands

FluksAqua serves up the facts against improper disposal of fat, oil and grease

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, USA, November 20, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Contact:
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As millions of American families celebrate Thanksgiving with traditional holiday meals, an inevitable crisis looms. Fat, oil and grease (FOG) from turkey, ham, bacon and all the trimmings will be discarded down kitchen sinks and toilets across the nation.

To shed a light on the damaging disposal of FOG, FluksAqua, an environmentally-engaged free water and wastewater utility forum, conducted a national survey to ask Americans how they fare with the FOG of Thanksgiving.

Key findings of the survey:

Americans (say) they do the right thing

An impressive 80.6% of Americans claim that they dispose of Thanksgiving FOG using a separate container (the right way). Only 19.5% fess up to dumping FOG down a kitchen drain or toilet.

Sadly, the facts don't jive. Greasy buildups remain an increasingly large problem across the US. In fact, <u>last month a massive fatberg</u> (a congealed mass of fat, personal care products and similar items found in sewer systems) was responsible for a sewer overflow that discharged around 1.2 million gallons of sewage into Jones Falls in Baltimore. In densely populated cities like New York, the problem is increasingly concerning. The City of New York Department of Environmental Protection, which services over eight million customers reported that 71% of sewer backup complaints were related to grease buildups in 2016.

New York and other major cities like Houston and Los Angeles have implemented FOG diversion programs to help curb the problem, but FOG build-ups remain a recurring nation-wide concern, especially around holidays.

"It is quite a spectacle to see dark brown tanks turn silver every Thanksgiving," says Nick Hansen, a senior wastewater treatment plant operator in California. "It's the turkey grease floating to the surface and the sunlight reflecting off of it."

Americans are divided on FOG Flushing

A surprisingly close number of American dinner guests would "suggest using a separate container" for FOG disposal (35.2%) vs. 30.6% who would say nothing because "it's not their home."

14.1% of Americans would point out that flushing FOG "is wrong" 20.1% say 'they don't care' A Majority of Americans will be Cooking a Thanksgiving Meal

While 33.8% report they aren't cooking for anyone this Thanksgiving, the majority of Americans (66.1%) will be cooking some kind of a family meal.

Fact-finding research on fat flushing

Using a popular American brand of frozen and stuffed turkey, FluksAqua went to the test kitchens and cooked two turkeys in the recommended standard size range for a Thanksgiving meal that served 10-12 adults. Both birds produced over one cup of liquid fat. See our research here in an expanded online newsroom.

"One cup of fat probably doesn't seem like a lot of liquid to flush into the system," said Dr. Hubert Colas, President Americas, FluksAqua. "But when you consider that thousands of households could be pouring that same cup of fat down the drain, it becomes a problem. This fat accumulates to create a clog in the sewer infrastructure and has the potential to damage pipes. Your cup of turkey fat may actually cost your water utility thousands of dollars in repairs which is ultimately paid by taxpayers."

What you can do to prevent it

Ideally, Americans around the country would stop flushing FOG down drains altogether. "We recommend using a reusable container to dispose of it through your regular waste system, or an environmental depot," suggests Dr. Colas. "Reducing FOG waste in the water infrastructure means less pressure on the system and can lower operating costs.

FluksAqua is working together with cities around the world to implement plans of action to prevent FOG build ups and save taxpayers thousands of dollars.

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About FluksAqua:

FluksAqua (<u>www.fluksaqua.ca/en/</u>) is the world's largest online community created by a dedicated group of water and wastewater professionals to facilitate a constant and interactive flow of information between operators and professionals on issues of water safety, infrastructure, conservation and optimization.

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