



### Points of Interest

- Keeping Pipes Fat Free
- Flood Prevention & Preparedness
- Sidewalk Safety Alert
- Paying Bills in Person
- Tip of the Season

Volume 2, Issue 6  
November/December 2006

**Sewer block or overflow?  
Call us first at 644-8949**

VALLEJO SANITATION & FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT

# Currents

## KEEPING YOUR PIPES FAT-FREE

With the holiday season fast approaching, Vallejo water quality experts are on the alert for fat. Not the kind that builds up around the waistline, but the kind that can block the sewer line.

Deep-fried turkeys, rich gravies, greasy latkes and other fat laden dishes are an undeniable part of the holiday season.

Unfortunately, discarding the remains of these culinary delights down the sink can cause problems for the sanitary sewer system.

According to Vallejo Sanitation & Flood Control District's field operations personnel, between 35 and 40% of residential sewer backups are caused by fats, oils and grease from sinks and drains.

While the trend toward using turkey fryers seems to be slowing down as residents try to cook in more healthful ways, the truth is that *all* fats are part of the problem. And the problems aren't unique to Vallejo, they occur everywhere.

"To the sewer system, all fats are created equal," says Phil Bobel of the Bay Area Clean Water Agencies. "When it gets to the pipes, olive oil is no better than butter."

What happens is pretty

simple: fats, oil, and grease build up in pipes and cause clogging problems which, at their worst, can result in sewer overflows. All year long, people pour

byproducts of cooking down their sink drains. These include butter and oil from pan frying, hamburger and bacon grease, and more. During the holiday season, it is expected that larger quantities of these fats will make their way to the sanitary sewer system via the kitchen sink.

"You never think that the turkey dinner or the batch of french fries you make will affect anything other than your waist line," says Bobel.

Sewer blockages and overflows can be very unpleasant ... and pricey. Besides the mess, untreated sewage can cause health hazards and threaten the environment. Overflows may require expensive cleanup. Sometimes, residents end up paying for these cleanups directly, but even when your local city or sewer agency does the cleanup, residents end up paying higher sewer bills due to clean-up costs.

This is a problem



homeowners can help to prevent if they take some simple steps to reduce the amount of fats, oil, and grease that enter their pipes.

Here are just a few simple tips that can help:  
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## KNOW YOUR FLOOD POTENTIAL

### ***Did you know?***

*A **100-year flood** is often used as a benchmark for catastrophic flooding. This magnitude of flood has a 1% chance of occurring within any given year.*

*A **floodplain** is defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as an area prone to flooding.*

*A **flood stage water level** is the water level at which a river overflows its banks.*

*A **flood watch** means a storm is possible in your area.*

*A **flood warning** means that a flood is occurring or about to occur in your area.*

Be aware if that if you live in a low-lying area there could be a high risk of flooding. Call the Vallejo Public Works Department at 648-5229 and ask whether your property is in a flood plain and if it is



above or below the flood stage water level. To help determine your flood risk, consider the elevation of your home compared to the street level.

If your home was built after the establishment of the Federal Flood Insurance Program thirty years ago, its floor elevation is most likely above the flood stage water level. If your home is

older, this may not be the case. Also, if you have converted a basement or garage into a living space, it may be subject to flooding.

Homes outside of floodplains can sometimes be in danger of flooding as well. Residents, whether they live in a floodplain or not, should be familiar with flood prevention and preparation.

## CAN I PREVENT FLOODING?

Yes! Whether you live in urban or rural areas, taking precautionary measures can help prevent flood damage during the rainy season.

- Clean out gutter downspouts.
- Keep trash and

leaves out of street gutters to prevent clogging storm drains.

- Keep the drainage system (creeks and culverts) of your property clear of debris.

- Clear dead trees that may block a drainage system. Even during storms, it's possible to lower the potential for flooding by raking leaves that are clogging a storm drain.

## VSFCD'S FLOOD CONTROL ROLE

The District's primary role in flood control is to protect lives and property from the effects of flooding by comprehensive, coordinated flood prevention planning. The District evaluates flood risk and implements flood control measures such as requiring new development to construct detention basins.

The District:

- Implements flood control projects
- Maintains existing flood control facilities
- Develops and implements master plans for selected areas
- Provides technical support and information on flood control for the City.

- Reviews proposed development projects to see that they meet District standards.

The District also works to protect Vallejo from the threat of floods by designing and constructing channels, storm drains, dams, pump stations and other drainage related facilities.

## PREPARE YOUR HOME

You can help prevent or reduce damage caused by flooding with these simple tips:

- Secure motor oil, antifreeze, and household chemicals on high, enclosed shelves.
- Landscape with native plants that resist soil erosion.
- Raise your washer, dryer and other equipment in your garage above the base flood elevation. This is

the elevation of a 100-year flood event.

- For the few homes with basements, install flood shields or barriers above the base flood elevation.
- For rural residents with septic systems, new septic systems should be



constructed in areas that will not be impacted by floodwaters. Flooded septic systems are considered threats to public health.

### Websites

*National Weather Service*

[www.crh.noaa.gov](http://www.crh.noaa.gov)

*The Weather Channel*

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

*American Red Cross*

[www.RedCross.org](http://www.RedCross.org)

*Floodplain Management Association*

[www.floodplain.org](http://www.floodplain.org)

*Vallejo Sanitation & Flood Control District*

[www.vsfcd.com](http://www.vsfcd.com)

## PREPARE YOUR FAMILY

- Check your homeowners or renters insurance for flood coverage—if none exists, consider purchasing it.
- Keep insurance policies, documents and other valuables in a safe-deposit box.
- Keep emergency numbers by all phones.
- Store supplies at work, home and car

in handy locations: first aid kit and essential medicines, non-perishable food items, non-electric can opener, cash, portable radio, flashlights and extra batteries.

- Store drinking water in closed, clean containers in case water service is interrupted. Allow one gallon of water

per person per day for at least three days.

- Know safe routes from your home or office to high, safe ground.
- Keep your car fueled.
- Keep sandbags and other emergency building materials handy for waterproofing.

## SANDBAGS

During the winter, the District makes free sandbags and sand available to Vallejo area residential customers. You will need supplies before you come, so

check our website at [www.vsfcd.com](http://www.vsfcd.com). The Sandbag Station is located at the back of the treatment plant at the west end of Solano Avenue.



### Sources

*Solano County Flood Awareness, Solano County Water Agency, Office of Emergency Services*

**FAT-FREE PIPES** *continued from front page*

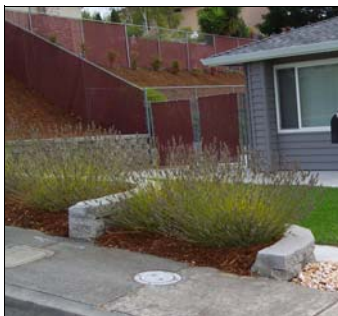
- Do not put dairy products, fats, oil, grease or greasy foods down the garbage disposal or drain.
- Freeze small amounts of fats and grease in a container with a tight-sealing lid and dispose of it in a trash receptacle.
- For greasy pans, first pour off the grease into a container as mentioned above. Then wipe any remaining grease out of the pan with a paper towel before washing as usual.
- For large quantities of cooking oil and other fats (such as from turkey deep fryers), call your local household hazardous waste collection facility or sewage treatment plant for guidance on disposal.

It's easy for Vallejo residents to recycle used cooking oil and grease, and prevent drain clogs. Simply bring it to Vallejo Garbage Service at 2021 Broadway in Vallejo. Hours are Thurs-Sat 8 AM to 4 PM. No appointment is necessary, but they're closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. For more information, call 552-3110. If you'd like to receive a free brochure on Fat Free Sewers, call 644-8949 ext. 292.

**SIDEWALK SAFETY ALERT!**



*Sidewalk shows District cleanout cover, before and after replacement.*



In the past few months, more than fifty cement cleanout covers have been stolen, leaving a safety hazard on Vallejo sidewalks. We are asking residents to report any missing sewer cleanout covers so they can be replaced.

A cleanout is an access point to a sewer line that leads from a house to the main sewer line in the street. District workers and plumbers use the cleanout to repair clogged or damaged sewer lines.

The covers are eight inches across, two inches deep, and weigh eight pounds.

"We used to experience an occasional loss," says Lonnie Holt, Field Operations Manager. "But in the past month or two the numbers have skyrocketed. It's creating a real safety hazard out on the sidewalks."

Please keep your eyes open when walking down the sidewalk, and notify the District if you see any missing cleanout covers. Call 644-8949; the phones are answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The covers will be replaced as soon as possible.

If you see someone stealing a cleanout cover, please notify the Vallejo Police department immediately.

Please, be safe and help us prevent vandalism.

**PAYING BILLS IN PERSON**

Do you pay your bill in person? Now you have the added convenience of more locations to pay your bill. You can pay your bill in person at the District

Cashier's Office at 450 Ryder Street, or at our new location at West-America Bank at the corner of Tuolumne and Tennessee Streets in

Vallejo. To make a payment at West-America Bank, bring your remittance slip and pay at any teller. The bank will give you a



*Tip of the Season*

*Wrapping presents can be a joy and a chore during the holidays. It can also cause pollution in air and water. When metallic wrapping paper is burned, harmful metals are released into the air, and eventually make their way into waterways. Here are some creative alternatives:*

- Use newspaper comics; they're funny and recyclable too
- Decorate paper grocery bags with stamps and finish with bows or holly
- Fill reusable holiday tins and baskets with festive treats
- Wrap your gift in a beautiful scarf or table napkin
- Reuse gift bags you've received.



*Currents* is produced bimonthly by the Vallejo Sanitation & Flood Control District. For more information, visit [www.vsfcd.com](http://www.vsfcd.com) or call (707) 644-8949.