

## **FAQ's**

### ***What is FOG and what is the FOG control program?***

FOG stands for Fats, Oils and Greases. Fats, oils and greases are natural by-products of the cooking and food preparation process.

The FOG control program is being implemented by the Gloucester County Department of Public Utilities in order to monitor and reduce the amount of FOG that enters our sanitary sewer system.

### ***Why shouldn't FOG go down the drain?***

FOG sticks to the sides of pipes and eventually clogs them. This backs up the pipes and causes sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs), possibly in your home or yard!

### ***How does FOG create a sewer blockage?***

Fats, oils and greases in a warm liquid form may appear to be harmless since they flow easily down the drain. However, as the liquid cools, the FOG solidifies and separates from other liquids in the sewer pipes. The layer of FOG sticks to the sewer pipes and, over time, the flow of wastewater becomes restricted and can cause a backup or overflow.

### ***What are the sources of FOG? Who produces FOG?***

Common sources of FOG include meat fats, dairy products, food scraps, cooking oils, baked goods, sauces, dressings, sandwich spreads, gravies, marinades, shortening, lard, butter and margarine.

FOG is produced by restaurants, cafeterias, delis, bakeries, residential homeowners, daycares, assisted living, social halls—basically, and anyone who deals with food, especially while cooking.

### ***Why is the issue of sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) important?***

Overflowing sewers release bacteria, viruses and other pathogens that may be dangerous to human health. The sewage may be released into your business or home, or into our waterways, streets and parks. SSOs are unpleasant and expensive to clean up, and if they occur on private property, it is you, as the property owner, who is responsible for the clean-up.

If the County is responsible for a clean-up, manpower and money are wasted on something that could have been avoided. The costs associated with SSOs are not limited to the Public Utilities clean-up costs of containment, removal and disposal of contaminated materials, emergency line clearing, disinfectants, sampling and testing, record keeping and documentation, public notification, EPA and VDEQ enforcement actions. The non-direct costs may include media related costs, property damages, public relations, insurance, exposure to untreated wastewater (pathogens and viruses) and decreased tourism. These costs will eventually trickle down into customers' sewer bills.

***Is there a law against overflowing sanitary sewers?***

Yes. The federal Clean Water Act and the Virginia DEQ comparable water quality regulations prohibit wastewater discharges into the waters of the state without a permit.

***Can the County of Gloucester tell where grease is coming from?***

Yes. By checking manholes and using CCTV, the County can tell which sanitary service area and usually which specific building or neighborhood grease is coming from. If grease blockages are occurring frequently in a certain area, the County will make an effort to inform the residents in the area so that they can be more aware of their grease disposal methods and help to fix the problem.

***What can I do to keep fats, oils and greases out of the sewer system?***

1. Can the grease – Pour used cooking grease into an empty, heat-safe container, such as a soup can and store it in the freezer. Once solidified, toss the can into the garbage.
2. Scrape your plate – Wipe all pots, pans, dishes and cooking utensils with a paper towel prior to washing to absorb the grease.
3. Catch the scraps – Eliminate using the garbage disposal. Catch food scraps in your sink with baskets or strainers. Then throw in the trash.

***What should I do if I experience a sewer blockage or overflow?***

First, call the Gloucester County Department of Public Utilities at (804) 693-1230 or (804) 693-4044. They will come and determine whether the blockage is on your property or County property. If the blockage is occurring on County property and cannot be traced exclusively back to you, then they will deal with the clean up. If the blockage is on your property and is obviously due to your improper disposal practices, you will have to hire a plumber to fix the problem.

***What do I do with the oil used in deep fryers?***

Wait until the oil in your fryer has completely cooled and use a funnel to pour the oil into a container. If you are not planning to reuse the oil, seal the container tightly and put it in the trash. Never pour oil down your home's plumbing or into the storm drain. If you have more than five gallons of used oil, do not put the oil into the trash; instead, you can visit the [www.askhrgreen.org](http://www.askhrgreen.org) website for additional recycling information

***Should I use my garbage disposal?***

Home garbage disposals do not keep fats, oils or greases out of your sewer system. In fact, garbage disposals help contribute to the problem of blocked sanitary sewer pipes. Food particles stick to the grease that clings to pipe walls and speeds the blockage of pipes. Garbage disposals use large amounts of water and electricity. Reduce or eliminate usage to lower utility bills.

***Should I use large quantities of detergent to wash grease down the drain?***

Products such as detergents that claim to dissolve grease may pass the grease down the pipeline and cause problems elsewhere. In short, you remove the grease from your immediate vicinity only to help create a large problem downstream.

***Why should homeowners take the responsibility for making the water cleaner? Isn't the sanitary sewer system the responsibility of Gloucester County?***

The environment affects all of us. Being good environmental stewards and preventing sewer overflows allows every person to live in a safer and healthier area. If a sewer backup occurs on your property, it is your responsibility for clean up.

***Why are oils that do not solidify a problem?***

Oils entering the system cause problems in two ways:

1. Many do solidify at lower temperatures and, therefore, clog the system. Even if they don't solidify, they often bind to other forms of fats and greases.
2. Some oils move through the system so quickly that they cannot be fully broken down in the treatment process.

***How should I dispose of fats, oils and greases?***

Larger quantities of fats, oils and greases left in pans from cooking should be placed in a tin can and stored in the refrigerator or freezer. Once the container is full, it can be discarded in your household garbage or you can visit the [www.askhrgreen.org](http://www.askhrgreen.org) website for additional recycling information. Smaller amounts of cooled grease, salad dressings and sauces should be scraped into the trash with a spatula. Any excess grease can be absorbed with a paper towel and tossed into the garbage.

***Isn't throwing containers full of grease into the landfill just creating a different problem?***

Over time, fats, oils and greases are very effectively broken down under landfill conditions. Very low levels appear in water leached from landfills. Fats, oils and greases cause greater environmental problems when they enter the wastewater system.

***Email:*** [FOG@gloucesterva.info](mailto:FOG@gloucesterva.info)

***Contact Information:***

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***Hours of Operation:*** Monday thru Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM