

# MARBLEHEAD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION



## THE FLOW N' GO

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1

JULY / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2021

### COMMISSION DEPARTMENTS EMBRACE THE 'NEW NORM'

While some things may never be the same in this post-pandemic world, the Water and Sewer Commission is pleased to announce that most COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. Our office is now open to customers and our employees have resumed performing in-person inspections and installations.

Throughout the state-of-emergency the office staff continued to serve the public, though at a distance, either over the telephone or by using drop-boxes. Customers are once again welcome to conduct business in person during our regular business hours of Monday through Thursday, 7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

A customer service area has been installed and staff will service the public through a Plexiglas window. Access to the inner-office will be by appointment only.

During the pandemic, our technicians were restricted from entering residences to conduct inspections or install meters or valves. So as to inconvenience our customers as little as possible, processes were developed to assure that work could continue as close to normal as possible.

When a new water meter needed to be installed, arrangements were made with the customer's plumber to pick up a meter and install it. For inspection of deduct meters, the customer would take pictures of the installation and email them to the Commission for review and temporary acceptance until an in-person inspection could be done.

For real estate transfer inspections, the seller was encouraged to do a self-inspection to identify and rectify any potential issues prior to the sale of the property. The seller and buyer would then sign a document authorizing a technician to conduct the actual inspection when permitted.

(If you purchased a property in Marblehead during the COVID restrictions and signed the Transfer Inspection Authorization form, the Commission will be in contact with you to schedule the in-person inspection. For upcoming sales, real estate agents and sellers should schedule the inspection as soon as the property is placed on the market or at least several weeks prior to the expected transfer. Further information on real estate transfers is available on our website at [Marblehead.org/waterandsewer](http://Marblehead.org/waterandsewer).)

Major water and sewer construction projects, such as the cleaning and lining of the water pipes on Tedesco Street, installation of new water lines in the Bassett Street area, demolition of the Village Street water tank, and a complete rehabilitation of the Sargent Road pump station, continued mostly uninterrupted during the pandemic. Workers for construction companies contracted for these and other projects followed all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention protocols like wearing masks, arriving at job sites in separate vehicles and other precautions.

Some of the restrictions imposed may have seemed excessive at times, but they have proven their worth by keeping our employees safe and available to respond to emergency situations such as water breaks and to assist the public whenever possible.

We are now happy to be able to emerge from the cocoon that was COVID and to welcome our valued customers back.

The water and sewer commissioners, superintendent, office staff and water and sewer department crews would like to thank all of our customers for their cooperation and understanding over the past year or so. We would also like to thank the Marblehead Board of Health for their guidance and assistance in keeping everyone safe.

### AUTO-PAYMENTS ARE NOT ADVISED

The Commission has received many inquiries lately about automatic payment of their water and sewer bills. While it is possible to set up automatic withdrawals through the Town's online payment system, this is not advised.

Let's say that you are wintering in Florida and while you are away a pipe breaks in your home. This could result in a bill of several thousand dollars.

Can you imagine having \$3,000 withdrawn from your account without you knowing it?

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Sump Redirection Program  
[www.resump.org](http://www.resump.org)

**LEGISLATION WOULD REQUIRE PROPER LABELING OF ‘FLUSHABLE WIPES’ IN MA**

You’ve read it in *The Flow n’ Go* many times: Don’t flush the so-called ‘flushable wipes’ down the toilet as they can clog sewer lines and cause sewer backups and damage sewer station pumps. In Massachusetts alone, it is estimated that flushed wipes costs sewer operations nearly \$10 million annually. (And this number does not include the cost of damage caused to private residences and businesses by sewer backups.)



greatly exasperated the problem.)

Two Bills have been filed for the 2021-2022 Massachusetts Legislative Session that would require specific labeling on all packaging that contains nonwoven disposable product: Bill SD.1057 in the Senate and Bill HD.1625 in the House. Both bills would require that the phrase “Do Not Flush” be printed on the package in a size equal to at least two percent of the surface area of the principal display panel.”

Since the early 2000’s, when the variety of wipes first hit store shelves in large numbers, they have been aggressively marketed as a replacement for toilet paper, mops, and cleaning rags. This multi-billion-dollar industry has had disastrous impacts on local sewer systems, including Marblehead’s.

Will requiring the words “Do Not Flush” on the package label stop people from flushing these disposable wipes? Probably not, but any step taken to prevent the flushing of these materials down the toilet is a step in the right direction. (Who reads labels, anyway?)

The wipes are manufactured from nonwoven sheets that are not “dispersible” in normal sewer conditions. They include moist toilet tissue or cloth that is used for general personal hygiene or cleaning purposes, diaper wipes, facial wipes and household cleaning and disinfectant wipes. (As one can imagine, the increased use of disinfectant wipes during the pandemic has

The best way to dispose of these—and all other types of wipes? Simply toss them in your trash bin. Remember, just because a product claims to be ‘flushable’ doesn’t mean that it really is safe to flush! Changing your habits now could save the Town—and you—a lot of money later.

**BACKFLOW PREVENTION DEVICE REQUIRED FOR ALL IRRIGATION SYSTEMS; ‘STRONGLY’ RECOMMENDED FOR ALL HOSE CONNECTIONS**

With the summer months upon us, homeowners will be using a lot more water outside. They will be watering their lawns and gardens, filling swimming pools, and washing their cars and boats.

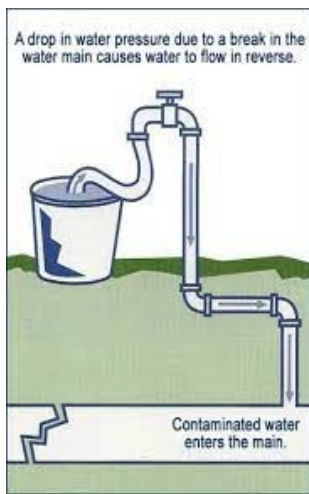
the water and detergent from the bucket into the water distribution system.

spigot as well as Marblehead’s entire drinking water distribution system.

With this increased water use comes an increase in the chances for contamination of your home’s and the Town’s drinking water supply. This can occur when contaminated water is syphoned back into the water distribution system.

As another example, lets say that you use one of those fertilizer or insecticide mixers that attach to the end of your garden hose to feed your grass. There is a fire in town and the fire department

**Required for Irrigation Systems**  
If you have an irrigation system, backflow devices are not just recommended—they are *required*.



opens a hydrant, again causing a sudden drop in water pressure. The chemicals in the sprayer could be sucked up the tube and into our drinking water supply.

Federal and state regulations, as well as Marblehead’s Cross-Connection Program, require that all permanently-installed irrigation systems have, at a minimum, a testable pressure vacuum breaker (a backflow preventer) installed.

Lets take a look at a couple of scenarios of how this could happen:

To prevent these situations from happening, the Marblehead water department *strongly* recommends the installation of backflow devices such as a low-cost hose bib vacuum breaker for all inside and outside hose connections.

Failure of a homeowner to maintain in working order a backflow device installed on an irrigation system or failure to provide proof of inspection may result in termination of water service to the residence. All homeowners with an in-ground sprinkler system are subject to the provisions of these regulations.

You use a bucket of soapy water to hand-wash your car. You put the detergent into the bucket and then put the end of the hose into the bucket to fill it. All of a sudden a water main in town bursts, causing a rapid drop in water pressure. This pressure drop could cause the water to flow in reverse, suctioning

Backflow preventer devices can be purchased at hardware or home improvement stores and are a great way to help protect the drinking water in your home

(More information on backflow devices as well as testing requirements can be found at [www.marblehead.org/water](http://www.marblehead.org/water). Applicable state regulations can be found at [mass.gov/dep](http://mass.gov/dep) and searching for ‘backflow preventer regulations.’)