



THIS TIME ELGIN GETS ITS COACHING TARGET — 11

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COMING SUNDAY: Pandemic: two years later

'Flushable' wipes flush away tax dollars

BY SCOTT RAINS

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Don't be fooled by so called "flushable" wipes.

Sure, their moisturized fibers do the trick to clean you up following the morning constitutional. But don't fall for the advertising. Throw them in the trash when you're done, said Glenn Hinton, City of Lawton Wastewater Superintendent for the past five years.

"We like to say, 'no wipes down the pipes,'" he said. "Throw them in the trash."

Hinton was with a crew from his division who spent Thursday morning at the sewer overflow station at Southwest 6th Street and Belmont Avenue. Their job was to clean out the basket that catches the majority of wipes and other debris from the lines before they pass through the grinder and, potentially, gum up the works.

"There's a myriad of things that go into the sewer," he said. "It can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in manpower, clean ups, etc."

According to Hinton,



Zach Deblunk is elated as he p
alien creature at the Lawton P
held a series of activities throu
"Alien Invasion."

Library hos Break 'Alien

BY PAYTON WILLIAMS

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Tuesday afternoon, a
crowd of kids gathered in

Wipes

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He estimated 90 percent, or 322, of those calls were due to “flushable” wipes.

At a cost of \$222.62 associated with a single blockage call, that means it's cost the City of Lawton approximately \$71,683.64.

In that same time period, 160 calls to Wastewater Collection with response to sanitary sewer overflows due to wipes cost taxpayers \$585.39 a pop. Hinton calculated the past year's calls for these incidents rang up to around \$93,662.40, not including the cost of chemicals used in the clean-up. That's another approximately \$8,000 annually.

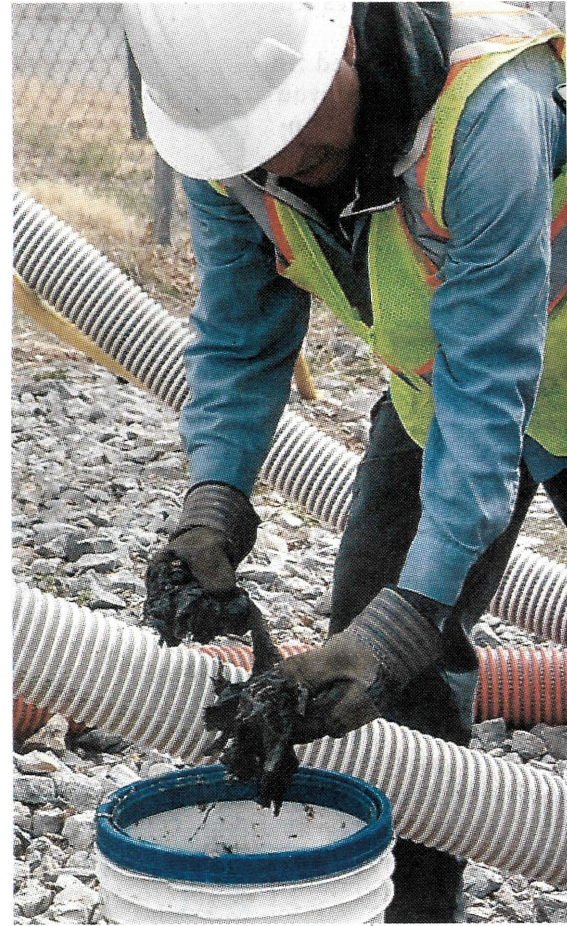
“It's a major issue, you should only flush things that disintegrate,” he said. “Even though they're called flushable, you can flush anything. You can also flush a Hot Wheels car down the toilet, but don't.”

“Toilet paper, pee and poo, that's what it's for,” he added.

Hinton said his first year as superintendent saw 30 sewer overflows. Last year, the incidents rose to 175 and he said this year has already seen 90 of those types of calls. He said this problem really began to grow with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and people's increased use of the wipes.

Along with the 6th and Belmont station, there are two others: Sungate and MacArthur. Hinton said the 6th Street station has something the others don't: a grinder. He said this location is one that doesn't back up like the others.

While 80 percent of the blockages are due to flushable wipes, Hinton said a close second is grease poured into pipes. Hot water and soaps won't



Scott Rains

City of Lawton Wastewater Division's Thierry Schroeer pulls soiled “flushable” wipes from a collection bucket Thursday at the Southwest 6th Street and Belmont Avenue sewer overflow station.

“Every now and then there'll be a Barbie doll,” he said.

These blockages affect you in several ways. Hinton said at times, the blockages can cause a backup inside homes. If there has been a prior history, the City of Lawton may have to pay a damage claim, depending on the outcome. Other times, you'll be the one paying out of pocket.

One way or another, these costs come back to you.

In the past year it has cost Lawton taxpayers \$139,612.76 for Wastewater Collections to run calls and preventative maintenance due to the “flushable”

wipes, Hinton said. cleanup jobs and damage claim from March of cost taxpayers \$104,73 This makes a minimum \$244,347.71 it has cost taxpayers in one year from issues caused by “flushable” wipes.

“This number does not include any other damage claims that may have been paid out due to flushable wipes,” he said.

In the end, Hinton reiterated his advice for you can make the change that makes a difference.

“You can use the water. I understand people don't flush them away.”

“The Hope”

Every 3rd Sunday 7:30 p.m.

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