

Wastewater Treatment Fact Sheet

What is wastewater?

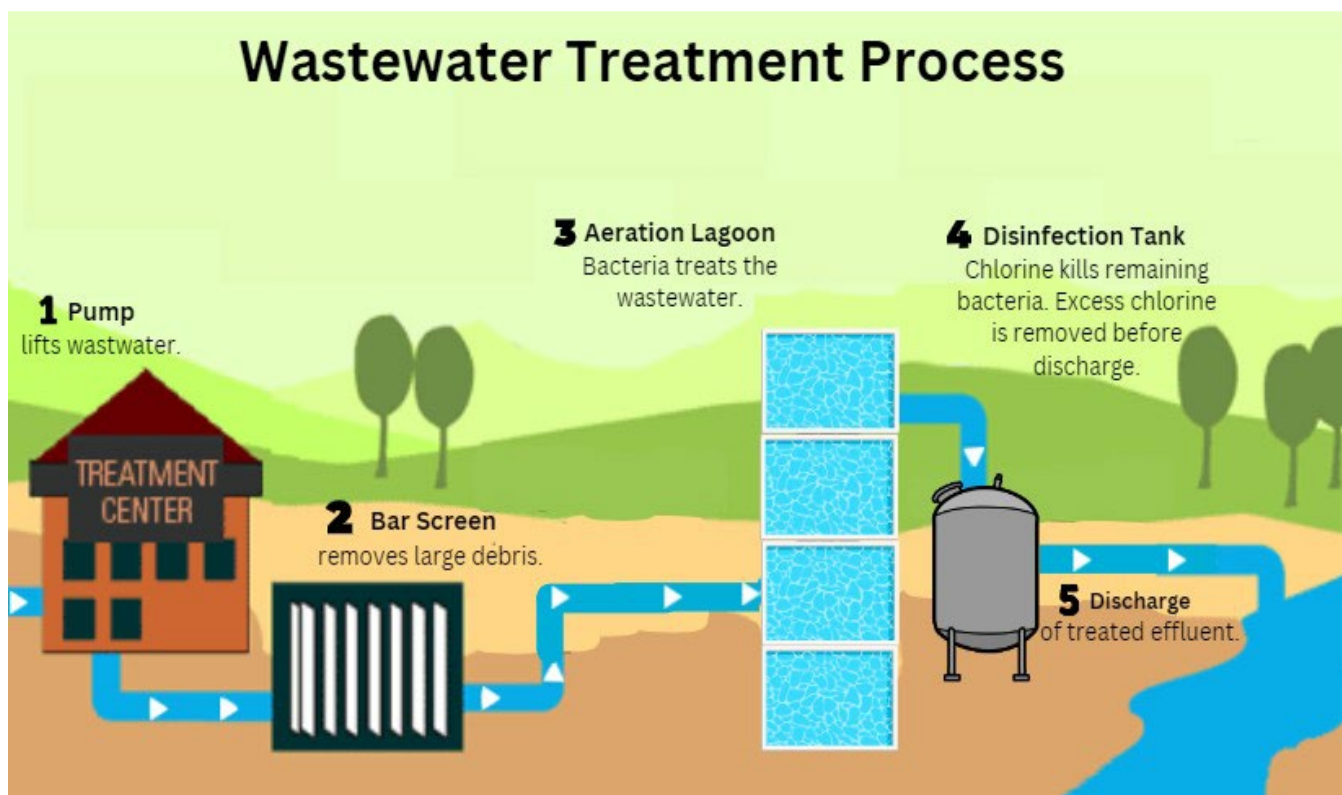
Wastewater is used water. This includes water from showers, bathtubs, sinks, toilets, washing machines, dishwashers, and drains from households and businesses. Wastewater can contain substances such as food scraps, human waste, and soaps.

What happens to wastewater when it leaves your home?

Wastewater flows from homes and businesses in your community through sewer pipes to a Wastewater Treatment Facility. The treatment plant uses a multi-step process to clean wastewater so it can be returned to the environment.

Why treat wastewater?

Wastewater contains many pollutants that can harm human, animal, and aquatic life. Wastewater Treatment Facilities are designed to reduce pollutants and solids in wastewater before discharging to local streams, making it safe for humans and animals to use the streams.



Sanitary Sewer Overflows

What is a sanitary sewer overflow?

Sanitary sewer systems collect wastewater and transport it to wastewater treatment facilities. A sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) is when raw sewage is released from a system before it is treated. SSOs can expose people to harmful pathogens through direct contact with wastewater that could make them ill. If SSOs reach local streams, they can negatively affect aquatic life and make it unsafe for humans and animals to use the streams.

Why do sanitary sewer overflows happen?

Causes of SSOs include:

- blocked sewer lines;
- illegal dumping of solids, oils, paints, and other materials into the sewers;
- infiltration of excessive stormwater into sewer lines during heavy rainfall;
- malfunction of pumping station lifts or electrical power failure; and
- old, cracked, or broken sewer pipes.

How are SSOs reduced or eliminated?

Regular maintenance and timely infrastructure upgrades can prevent SSOs. Certain items that are flushed down the toilet or dumped into sinks can block sewage pipes and cause SSOs. You can help reduce SSOs by not flushing the following:

- Wipes (even if marked as "flushable")
- Diapers
- Cotton Swabs
- Medication
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Dental Floss
- Cooking Oil and Grease

What to do if you see an SSO?

If you see an SSO, please immediately report it to:

- Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (800-528-5011)
- Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (928-871-7692)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (415-947-4510).

