

TAPPED IN

Bringing you news, updates and information from Watercare



A manhole in a front yard blocked by wipes, rags and fat, caught up on tree roots.

See inside for more information about overflows.

Tony Thompson (left) and Bradley Tiller (centre), contractors from IWS Eco-Monitoring Ltd, join Matt Simcox (right), from our Trade Waste Compliance Team, with a sample of the wipes, paper, fat and other items that have been improperly disposed of down toilets and sinks into our wastewater network.

Don't rush to flush

Be aware of what you put down toilets and sinks. Small items can cause big problems.

Our maintenance contractors maintain the pipes that take wastewater from your home to the wastewater treatment plants. Their job is twofold: carry out routine maintenance to ensure the wastewater network is working as it should, and attend emergency call-outs, where blocked wastewater pipes have caused overflows.

When you tell us about a wastewater overflow, our contractors will clear blockages and clean and sanitise the area.

“For us, undertaking routine maintenance

is really important,” says Lui Vete, a maintenance serviceperson with our central networks team. “By flushing pipes with high-pressure water we can clear things that have started building up in there, breaking up blockages before they cause problems.”

But when it comes to emergency call-outs and overflows, Lui says the main culprits are things people flush down toilets or pour down sinks at home.

“Rags and wipes are some of the biggest issues,” he says. “Most people just throw them away in the closest thing – the toilet!”

Most wastewater pipes are only 100 millimetres (four inches) in diameter and are not designed to carry anything other than wastewater and bio-degradable products, like human waste and toilet paper. But last year,

84 per cent of overflows during dry weather were caused by people flushing rubbish down the toilet, pouring cooking fat down the sink and tree roots that had grown into pipes.

Items like rags, sanitary items, wipes, dental floss and nappies don't break down in the wastewater network. Instead, they form large, impenetrable clumps that can block pipes. When this happens, undiluted wastewater can overflow into private properties and the wider environment, polluting your property and Auckland's streams and beaches.

The good thing is it's easy to reduce these kinds of overflows – just be aware of what you are putting down your toilets and sinks. Only human waste and toilet paper should be flushed down the toilet; everything else goes in the bin.

Be aware of what you put down your toilet

Dry-weather overflows – undiluted wastewater overflowing into the environment – occur when there is a build-up of fat or items like wipes in a pipe. These things don't break down in water or within the wastewater network like toilet paper does. Instead, they form large, impenetrable clumps that block pipes and cause overflows.

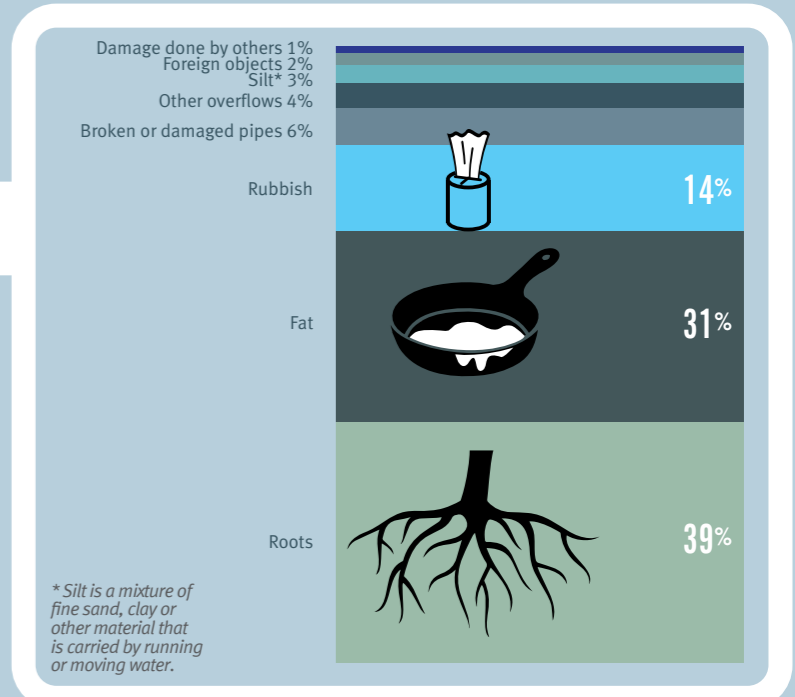
We call these 'dry weather' overflows because they happen during periods of dry weather. Wet-weather overflows – heavily diluted wastewater overflowing into the environment – occur when it rains, and are caused by too much stormwater entering the wastewater network.



The main causes of dry-weather overflows 2015-2016

Last year, **84%** of overflows during dry weather were caused by:

- fat
- rubbish
- tree roots



Fixing a blocked pipe in your home can cost

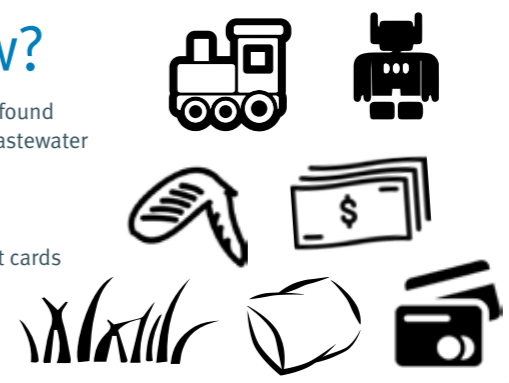
The average cost for a plumber in Auckland is \$85 + GST an hour. Although the cost will vary depending on the severity of the blockage, mileage, location and when the problem occurs (after hours can be much more expensive), even a small blockage in your private pipes can end up costing a significant amount.

By putting wipes, sanitary products, dental floss and nappies in the bin you're reducing your chance of blocked pipes, a nasty overflow on your property and an expensive plumbing bill.

Did you know?

Some of the weirdest things we've found causing blockages, or within the wastewater network, are:

- Children's plastic toys
- Whole chicken wings
- Money (notes mainly) and credit cards
- Concrete/gravel
- A pillow
- Grass clippings



You can help reduce overflows

Remember – only human waste and toilet paper should be flushed down the toilet. Everything else, including things such as wipes, sanitary products, dental floss and nappies, and fat, oil and grease from cooking, should be put in the bin.

Don't flush these:



Clean plugholes in sinks and baths/showers every so often to make sure they are clear of things like hair and food scraps, which can create blockages. A good idea is to use mesh screens on your plugholes to catch these items before they go down the drain.

What are we doing to reduce dry-weather overflows?

Where there are frequent dry-weather overflows, we routinely:

- flush pipes to clear them of items that could cause blockages – usually once or twice a year
- trim roots growing in and around pipes
- repair or replace damaged pipes so that tree roots cannot grow into them.

We also investigate to see whether anything else can be done. For example, in areas where there are high numbers of overflows caused by cooking fats and many food outlets, we visit staff in cafés and restaurants with information on how to dispose of hot fat correctly to stop recurring overflows.

Call us if you see an overflow

We're available to deal with overflows 24/7 – just phone us on (09) 442 2222. Once we know about it, we can send a crew out!

Remember – our prices have changed

The amount you pay for your water and wastewater services changed on 1 July, so the new prices will be on the bill that accompanies this newsletter. This price increase ensures we can continue to supply safe and reliable water and wastewater services now, as well as cater for Auckland’s future growth.

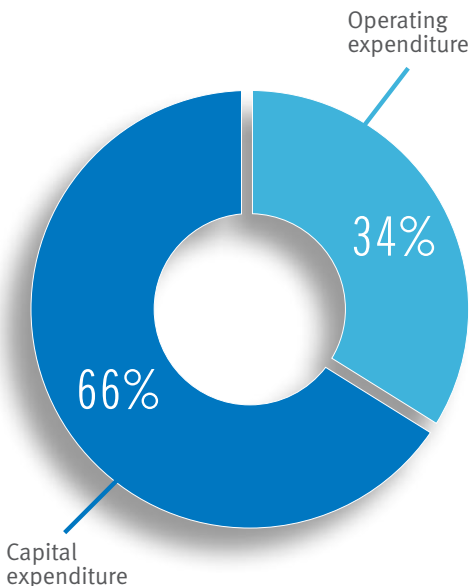
We put our prices up to cover increases in our operating expenses, and to fund capital expenditure for the replacement and upgrade of ageing assets. You’ll notice the cost for wastewater services has increased slightly more – this reflects the greater level of investment required in wastewater infrastructure, not only to provide for the demands of a growing city but also to replace and help maintain the level of service from our existing assets.

Water	Domestic wastewater	Non-domestic wastewater
The volumetric charge for water increased from \$1.444 to \$1.480 per 1,000 litres.	<p>If you have a water meter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fixed wastewater charge per meter increased from \$205 to \$211 per year. The volumetric charge increased from \$2.454 to \$2.535 per 1,000 litres of wastewater discharge. <p>If you do not have a metered water supply but are connected to the wastewater network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fixed charge increased from \$627 to \$647 per year. 	Fixed and volumetric wastewater charges for non-domestic customers increased by an average of 3.3 per cent. The actual price change depends on your selected pricing plan. You can view the pricing plans at www.watercare.co.nz > ‘business’ tab > ‘Non-domestic water, wastewater and other charges’.
<i>All prices include GST and are effective from 1 July 2017.</i>		

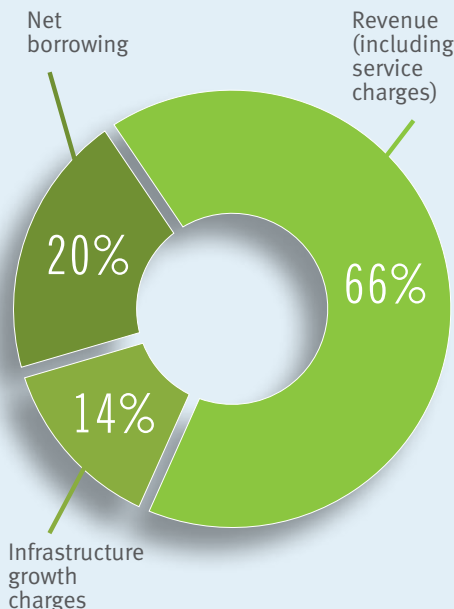
All of the money we receive from you goes into operating, maintaining and expanding our infrastructure. Any shortfall is financed through borrowing. We do not receive any funding from Auckland Council, rates or the Government. To find out more, visit our website (business or residential tabs > water, wastewater and other charges) or call (09) 442 2222, Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 6pm.

Our cash flow (10-year forecast from 1 July 2018)

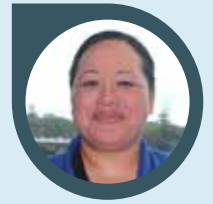
Expenditure (excluding depreciation and interest)



How we fund and finance expenditure



Ask Nisi



I've recently had a leak on my property fixed. Because this caused a higher water bill for me, I wanted to find out more about the leak allowance. What is it and how do I apply?

A leak allowance is a partial credit we can make at our discretion to help out if you've had a high water bill due to a water leak. If we accept your application, the allowance will appear as a credit on your next bill.

For residential customers, the allowance amount will be for all excess use based on typical usage for the same period in the previous year. If you have not been at the property for a full year, we will apply the typical average daily use.

To apply for a leak allowance, follow these steps:

1. Have the leak fixed.
2. Contact us so we can confirm whether you qualify for an allowance. You can email info@water.co.nz or phone us on (09) 442 2222.
3. If you qualify for an allowance, you can find the form at www.watercare.co.nz by:
 - searching for ‘Checking for water leaks’, then filling out and scanning or posting the application form, or
 - logging into your online account and applying for a leak allowance from there.

If there's something you've been wondering about in regard to our water or wastewater services, ask Nisi by emailing asknisi@water.co.nz.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Tapped In is your newsletter. If you would like to talk to us about any stories from this edition or your ideas for future issues, we'd love to hear from you. To get in touch, please phone our communications team on (09) 442 2222 or email info@water.co.nz. You can learn more about what we do at www.watercare.co.nz.