

FAQ: RELEASE OF FLUSHABLE PRODUCTS STANDARD

What is a Standard?

Standards are voluntary documents that set out specifications, procedures and guidelines that aim to ensure products, services, and systems are safe, consistent, and reliable.

What is the Flushable Products Standard (DR AS/NZS 5328:2022)?

The Standard sets out a framework, test methods and criteria for determining if products are suitable for flushing down a toilet. It also provides guidance and requirements for the labelling of products that are likely to be flushed down the toilet. It excludes toilet paper, liquids and soluble products.

What is a flushable product?

A flushable product is a product considered suitable for disposal through wastewater networks and treatment systems, including onsite treatment systems. It is flushable if it does not materially adversely impact those systems or remain recognisable in effluent leaving them after being through the wastewater treatment process.

Why do we need a Standard for flushable products?

Wastewater systems are designed to treat waste from toilets and urinals — faeces, urine and toilet paper — along with other waste from bathing, laundry and kitchen activities. Most also treat industrial and commercial discharges containing chemicals.

In recent years, products have been introduced in the marketplace that claim to be toilet flushable or are likely to be flushed down the toilet because they are used in bathrooms. Some of these products are not compatible with our wastewater systems and can lead to blockages.

Wastewater systems are vital to protect public health and the environment. When blockages occur, there is a risk that wastewater may spill from the system and create public health and environmental risks along with other unnecessary costs to water utilities and customers.

It's not just an issue here in Australia, internationally UK water utilities say it costs £100 million annually to clear blockages contributed to mainly by wet wipes. Scottish Water recently reported an annual cost of £7 million responding to 36,000 blockages each year with the vast majority featuring wet wipes. Utilities in the US report similar experiences. Here in Australia and New Zealand the issue is costing the urban water industry tens of millions of dollars each year.

Media inquiries

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What does the symbol for packaging look like?

If you see this symbol on a product it means it has passed the criteria in the Standard and is safe for flushing.



Figure 4.1 from AS/NZS 5328:2022. © Standards Australia Limited/Standards New Zealand 2022

What does it mean for customers?

The Standard includes guidelines for manufacturers to clearly label products to better inform customers whether or not products are suitable for toilet flushing.

If a product meets the Standard and is therefore suitable for flushing, the packaging should display the “flushable” symbol. Packaging for non-flushable products that have a potential to be flushed, should clearly indicate that the product should NOT be disposed.

When will we start seeing the flushable symbol on products?

There is a grace period for the introduction of the Standard (X years). This period allows manufacturers of products to review their packaging to ensure it reflects the requirements in the Standard. However, we are aware of some products that will meet the criteria and could display the symbol on packaging in the next 6 months.

Do we still only flush the 3P's?

We know that poo, pee and toilet paper (the 3P's) are compatible with flushing and wastewater infrastructure. However, we can now add - check for the flushable symbol/logo. If there is no flushable symbol on the packet then it can't be flushed and needs to go in the bin. If you see the flushable symbol then it can be flushed.

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Are there other Standards like this around the world?

This Flushable Products Standard is one of the first of its kind in the world where there has been collaboration between water utilities and manufacturers in its development. There is already interest in adopting the Australian and New Zealand Standard from other countries. Israel has advised they are planning to adopt the Standard with no changes.

Who was involved in drafting the Standard?

The Standard has been many years in the making. Approximately 7 years ago WSAA initiated discussions between water utilities and peak bodies representing manufacturers of wipes products. Over the years these discussions evolved and it was agreed that the development of a Standard would provide a way forward in assisting all concerned parties, including customers.

The Standard was developed by a technical committee including manufacturers, water utilities, peak bodies and consumer groups. The members of the technical committee were:

- Australian Food and Grocery Council
- Water Services Association of Australia
- Standards New Zealand (SNZ)
- Consumers Federation of Australia
- Water New Zealand
- Australian Local Government Association
- Australian Water Association
- Water Industry Operators Association
- Accord Australasia Ltd
- Independent Chairperson (Australia)
- New Zealand Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board
- New Zealand Food & Grocery Council
- EPA Victoria
- Engineers Australia

Is the Standard voluntary?

The Standard is voluntary. However, for products to use a flushable symbol they must meet the requirements of the Standard. If they have not met the Standard requirement, they could be the subject of legal action. We are encouraging manufacturers of products to comply with the Standard, including the labelling requirements.

What types of products might pass the criteria in the Standard?

Those unlikely to harm plumbing, the wastewater network or contaminate the environment with plastic. This includes certain flushable wipes.

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What type of products might NOT pass the criteria in the Standard?

Those that are not compatible with household plumbing, the wastewater network or the downstream environment. This includes products containing plastic, products that don't disintegrate to a high level, or those that cannot pass easily through pipework or pumps.

What type of tests do products have to pass?

There are six tests and an attestation:

- 1) The product needs to clear a toilet and the drainline test – indicative of plumbing on the customer property.
- 2) It needs to not snag or block pumps, both household level pumps and wastewater network pumps (2 tests).
- 3) It needs to break apart readily as it moves through the wastewater pipework to an extent that shouldn't cause blockages or fatbergs. After 60 minutes in forces similar to those of a wastewater pipe, the majority of the product should be in pieces smaller than 2.45cm square.
- 4) The product should sink and not float as it moves through a treatment plant
- 5) The product should degrade biologically as it moves through a treatment plant
- 6) The manufacturer attests that the product does not contain any plastic. (Plastics are known to cause environmental harm, even in small pieces. Rather than test for their presence the Standard requires that the manufacturer should attest that plastic is not present at all in the product.)

Who will do the testing?

There are several international laboratories capable of doing the testing. Urban Utilities in Australia has a research laboratory that is in the process of seeking accreditation to undertake the testing.

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