



Responsible
Flushing
Alliance

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

#FlushSmart

CONSUMER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN



**DO NOT
FLUSH**

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

On behalf of the Responsible Flushing Alliance, I'm pleased to present our 2025 Annual Report, showcasing another year of significant progress in our mission to promote responsible flushing.

Following the strategic evolution initiated last year, our 2025 efforts doubled down on initiatives designed to fundamentally alter consumer habits and foster lasting, positive change. While increasing familiarity with the Do Not Flush symbol remains crucial, we firmly believe that true impact lies in shifting behavior at the household level. And we are delighted to report that our subsequent data has continued to trend positively, demonstrating that our educational initiatives are indeed increasing awareness and influencing behavioral change.

We have been tracking consumer attitudes and knowledge related to smart flushing practices since 2021 via annual surveys commissioned through Drive Research. We now have 5 years of data for California residents, as well as a year and a half of full national data.

For the overall U.S. population, between March 2024 and October 2025, we observed significant improvements. Nationally, familiarity with the Do Not Flush symbol rose to 81%, and the percentage of individuals reporting that they had flushed a non-flushable item showed a positive decline, from 53% to 50%. This growing awareness was also reflected in an enhanced recall of the Do Not Flush symbol appearing on product packaging for both baby wipes and disinfecting/household cleaning wipes. Not bad for nearly 2 years!

In California, the long-term impact of our work is even more pronounced when comparing 2021 baseline data to 2025. Over this period, Californians demonstrated a substantial surge in familiarity with the Do Not Flush symbol, increasing an impressive 13 points from 69% to 82%. Crucially, the proportion of Californians admitting to flushing non-flushable items saw a significant decrease of 9 points, falling from 58% to 49%, signaling tangible behavioral change. Like national trends, there was a marked improvement in the recall of the Do Not Flush symbol on key product categories like baby wipes and disinfecting/household cleaning wipes.

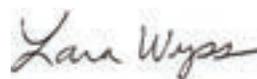
Our flagship initiative, #FlushSmart Month, continued its vital mission in 2025, leveraging the continued success of short-form video content and creativity to engage audiences and keep smart flushing in the cultural narrative. A standout effort this year was our innovative Potty Training for Grown-Ups influencer campaign.

Meticulously crafted using insights that households with children are 60% more likely to flush non-flushable items, this campaign aimed to powerfully remind parents to "only flush the flushable." Through "Toilet Tunes" by comedic musicians and "Toddler Teachers" where children humorously educated adults, we achieved significant amplification and authentic credibility, leading to over 5.2 million video views and a dramatic increase in video retention.

Beyond this, we empowered our partners with comprehensive toolkits, effectively reached industry leaders through targeted paid media and a successful LinkedIn campaign, and proactively supported the implementation of Michigan's proper labeling law for non-flushable wipes, in partnership with the Michigan Water Environment Association. Our collaborative blog posts and new educational materials further extended our reach and impact.

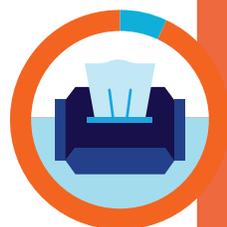
The results detailed throughout this report, from increased awareness to tangible shifts in behavior, underscore the effectiveness of our evolving, dynamic approach. RFA remains dedicated to building on this momentum, developing innovative and culturally relevant campaigns that will continue to protect our wastewater infrastructure for generations to come.

Sincerely,



LARA WYSS

President, Responsible Flushing Alliance



OVERVIEW:

Non-flushable items continue to severely clog and damage wastewater systems. Independent studies show that materials not designed to be flushed account for a staggering 99% of all clogs and accumulations observed in equipment at wastewater treatment plants. This leads to costly repairs, environmental hazards, and operational inefficiencies.

In response, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 818, known as the Proper Labeling of Wet Wipes Law, in October 2021. Effective July 1, 2022, **it mandates clear Do Not Flush labeling non-flushable wipes.** It also established the California Consumer Education and Outreach Program, requiring the industry to study consumer behavior and launch multimedia education campaigns.

KEY MANDATES INCLUDE:

1. A comprehensive statewide consumer education and outreach campaign in both Spanish and English;
2. A multimedia campaign to enhance consumer awareness of the Do Not Flush symbol;
3. Participation in a sewage collection study;
4. Annual consumer opinion surveys for five years to assess behavioral changes and awareness regarding non-flushable wipe disposal;
5. Provision of consumer education messaging for the symbol and label notice to wastewater agencies; and
6. Annual reporting to the Senate and Assembly Committees on campaign results, alongside a written annual report for the state Water Board website, a mandate this report is intended to fulfill.

Six other states (Washington, Oregon, Illinois, Colorado, New Jersey and Michigan) have enacted similar legislation requiring Do Not Flush labeling on non-flushable wipes.

**Non-flushable items
account for a staggering**

99%
of all clogs

CHALLENGE:

While many producers had implemented the Do Not Flush symbol onto the packaging of non-flushable wipes before the Proper Labeling of Wet Wipes Law, we knew education was needed for consumers to notice and understand the symbol's meaning. Since 2021, RFA has commissioned Drive Research to annually survey consumer awareness and understanding of proper disposal for household products, including non-flushable wipes. Initial findings underscored the critical and ongoing need for robust consumer education and awareness initiatives. In 2021, prior to the launch of our comprehensive campaign, 69% of consumers in California recalled seeing the Do Not Flush symbol — but only 37% of respondents felt truly knowledgeable about responsible flushing. Further research highlighted a significant need for behavioral change, with 60% of consumers self-reporting having flushed something non-flushable in the year prior. The primary reasons cited by these respondents included a perceived lack of education, the assumption that the item(s) were flushable, or simply giving little thought to the action.

Encouragingly, subsequent data has trended positively since, demonstrating that educational initiatives are increasing awareness and influencing behavioral change. This report will further detail campaign strategies and results.

Consumers needed education to
UNDERSTAND
the symbol's meaning.



**DO NOT
FLUSH**



SOLUTION:

#FlushSmart Month & Other Key Initiatives

#FlushSmart Month

FlushSmart Month, an RFA flagship initiative, continued its vital mission in 2025: to educate consumers and foster sustainable flushing habits. Our journey began in 2022 with a campaign that successfully kickstarted our #FlushSmart content and resources, details of which are chronicled in our 2022 Annual Report. While impactful, that initial effort merely scratched the surface of widespread poor flushing habits.

In 2023, we strategically adapted to the seismic shift in media consumption, embracing the rise of user-generated, short-form video content. This pivot was crucial to ensure our essential message resonated with target audiences and allowed #FlushSmart to break onto the scene, creating significant cultural relevance.

The 2023 #FlushSmart consumer education campaign proved highly successful: a follow-up survey conducted in Fall 2023 revealed a 3-point increase in familiarity with the Do Not Flush symbol, reaching 79% of Californian consumers. Furthermore, 78% of respondents recognized the importance of proper flushing to their community, and an impressive 91% of our target audiences indicated that seeing our messaging would likely influence their flushing habits.

Following the undeniable success of our 2023 approach in gaining cultural relevancy, *RFA doubled down on our short-form video content strategy in 2024 with a focus on younger generations*, who will soon be the primary stewards of our nation's water infrastructure.

And although past campaigns adeptly increased familiarity with the Do Not Flush symbol, RFA recognized that true impact stems from changing behavior. *Last year marked a significant strategic evolution, shifting our focus to initiatives designed to fundamentally alter consumer habits and foster lasting, positive change.* We moved forward with that focus — as well as the continued success with short-form video content — in 2025.



Potty Training for Grown-Ups: An Influencer Campaign for Behavioral Change

POTTY TRAINING FOR GROWN-UPS

The Potty Training for Grown-Ups influencer campaign of 2025 was meticulously crafted upon key insights derived from RFA's annual consumer survey data and broader behavioral understanding. Our data indicates that men 45 and under, as well as households with small children, are the worst offenders for flushing things they know they shouldn't.

This finding is particularly salient given that baby wipes — a product that explicitly requires the Do Not Flush designation — make up 30% of the wipes category, positioning parents as a leading consumer group for responsible flushing education.

For the 2025 #FlushSmart campaign, RFA embarked on a unique mission: "potty train grown-ups." **To effectively reach some of the biggest culprits of improper flushing — adults with children in the home —** and powerfully remind them to only flush the flushable, RFA carefully selected five influencers with a unique ability to resonate with their already engaged and loyal audiences.

The influencer mix was diverse and strategically chosen: two were musicians, two were families with young children, and one combined both musical talent and a family with young kids. This blend ensured broad appeal and varied content styles, maximizing engagement across different audience segments. The core objective was for these influencers to create memorable content that amplified the RFA message to "only flush the flushable" with the perfect balance of fun and educational impact.

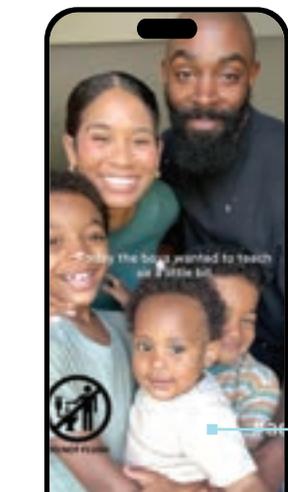
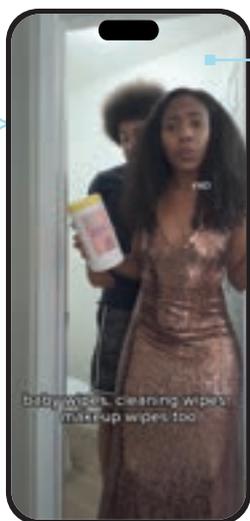
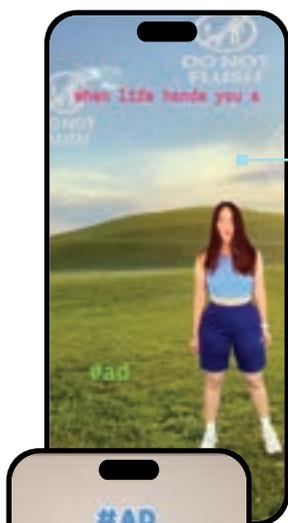
The campaign leveraged two distinct content "tentpoles" to effectively reach its target audience:

Toilet Tunes: Recognizing the profound power of music in learning and retention, particularly in the context of potty training, RFA collaborated with comedic influencers renowned for their hilarious and clever songs. These influencers created engaging "potty-training songs" specifically designed to be catchy and educational, helping adults internalize responsible flushing practices.

Toddler Teachers: Acknowledging that many adults, despite being potty-trained decades ago, still lacked proper flushing education, RFA partnered with family influencers whose children, full of personality and recently potty-trained themselves, became the "teachers." This series of social content featured toddlers humorously educating adults on both general potty-training principles and the specifics of responsible flushing.

Ultimately, this innovative influencer strategy fueled significant amplification and owned social media efforts, substantially boosting awareness and authentic credibility for the #FlushSmart campaign.

Once content was live and engaging organically, it was also amplified further via a paid media campaign. This integrated approach optimized performance, maximizing reach and ensuring the greatest possible impact for the Potty Training for Grown-Ups campaign.



Toolkits to Empower Our Partners

To support the campaign and empower broad participation, RFA developed a comprehensive toolkit for manufacturers and wastewater professionals. The resource enabled partners to readily share important information about responsible flushing practices with community members and consumers.

The toolkit provided a suite of ready-to-use assets, including downloadable social media graphics with clear "DO NOT FLUSH" messaging, encouraging consumers to always check labels and dispose of non-flushable items in the trash. It also featured engaging educational materials, such as printable Potty Training for Grown-Ups worksheets (crossword puzzles, subtraction games, and a potty-training checklist) to test knowledge in a fun way.

Furthermore, the toolkit offered practical templates for social media content, a customizable blog post template for deeper engagement, and concise talking points and FAQs, ensuring partners had all the necessary resources to effectively communicate the #FlushSmart message across diverse platforms and discussions.



Reaching Industry Leaders with Paid Media

To effectively reach key industry professionals and correct misinformation regarding flushable products, RFA launched a targeted paid media campaign within the Wastewater, Plumbing, and Sewage sectors. After a rigorous selection process, identifying partners with the necessary audience reach and content capabilities, RFA strategically partnered with Cole Publishing and Wastewater Digest.

Through Cole Publishing, RFA executed half-page print advertisements in MSW Magazine, Plumber Magazine, and Treatment Plant Operator Magazine, complemented by corresponding banner ads on their websites from August through October. Concurrently, a more in-depth custom “Top Tips” article, “Stop the Clogs: Implementing Effective Do Not Flush Campaigns in Your Community,” was developed and sponsored by RFA within Wastewater Digest and launched on September 9, **ensuring our critical messaging reached a broad and engaged professional audience through both direct advertising and trusted editorial content.**



UVM: **20,205**



UVM: **77,175**



UVM: **5,695**

UVM: **3,834**

*UNIQUE VISITORS PER MONTH (UVM)

UVM: **22,919,477**



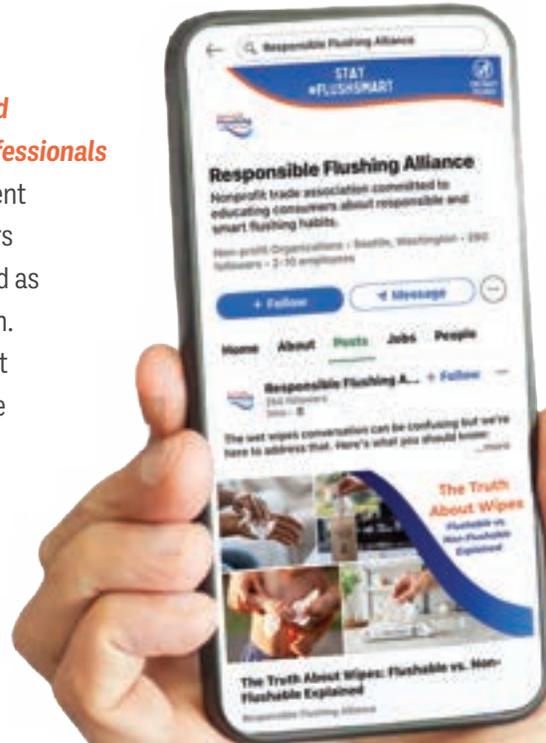
UVM: **15,434,575**



Highly Targeted LinkedIn Campaign

Recognizing the significant influence plumbing and wastewater professionals have in shaping public perception regarding "flushable" products, RFA developed a targeted LinkedIn campaign. Our goal was to directly engage these critical industry experts, who often serve as trusted advisors in their communities, particularly as internal sentiment analysis revealed their pivotal role in correcting or reinforcing public misconceptions.

Leveraging *LinkedIn's precise targeting capabilities, we deployed sponsored content designed to resonate directly with these professionals based on their job roles.* A key aspect of our strategy was to present RFA's messaging through the lens of credible third-party validators where possible, ensuring our educational materials were perceived as authoritative and less likely to be dismissed as purely brand driven. While campaigns targeting highly niche audiences — estimated at around 400,000 relevant professionals nationwide — can often be costly with potentially lower engagement, we've been notably encouraged by the results. We've observed engagement rates significantly exceeding our expectations.



Targeting highly niche audiences
— estimated at around

400,000

relevant professionals nationwide

Michigan Proper Labeling Law Support

In January, RFA developed a comprehensive, proactive strategy to support the implementation of Michigan's proper labeling law for non-flushable wipes, which officially went into effect on February 1, 2025. **Our goal was to ensure accurate messaging and mitigate potential misconceptions surrounding the new legislation.**

Our efforts included extensive media outreach, strategic press releases, engaging social media content, and a targeted paid media campaign. A key aspect of our strategy involved partnering with the Michigan Water Environment Association (MWEA) to amplify our message and create essential informational resources.

Together, we launched a coordinated communication effort, including:

- Press Release: Business Wire
- Michigan Law Explainer Video
- Michigan Law Fact Sheet
- Michigan Infographic
- B-Roll for Press

These initiatives significantly contributed to correctly understanding Michigan's new labeling requirements, fostering responsible disposal practices across the state, and encouraging everyone to always look for the Do Not Flush symbol.



Partner & Collaborator Engagement on the Blog

In 2025, RFA collaborated with partners and other organizations to develop informational blog posts, including the following:



East Valley Water District's Approach to Responsible Flushing Education



Empowering Menstruators, Protecting Plumbing: The Aunt Flow Story



Potty Training, Meet Responsible Flushing: How DUDE Wipes is Changing the Game



Your Toilet's Not a Trash Can: A Message from the Michigan Water Environment Association



Reimagine Waste: Building a Circular Economy with NSAC



How WaterWipes Paved the Way with Plastic-Free Baby Wipes

Industry Presence

Events:

WOW25

RFA attended the WOW25 Conference, presenting progress in promoting smart flushing habits, including checking wet wipe labels. Mel the Talking Toilet also engaged attendees with #FlushSmart phrases, reinforcing the distinction between flushable and non-flushable wipes.

NACWA StratComm25 Conference

RFA attended The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) #StratComm25 conference to present a session about running an effective consumer education campaign and learn from the country's best clean water communicators.

CWEA Annual Conference

RFA spoke at the 2025 California Water Environment Association (CWEA) Annual Conference, highlighting the significant negative impacts of improper flushing behaviors and highlighting key findings from our collection study.

Aunt Flow Webinar

RFA joined a webinar from Aunt Flow to help educate building managers about proper flushing habits.

RFA Annual Meeting

Representatives from CASA joined the 2025 annual meeting to provide updates on WIPPES legislation.

RFA also attended the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) and the National Association.

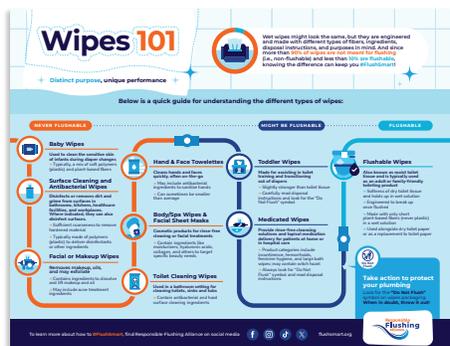


Educational Materials

RFA created new evergreen content throughout 2025 for audiences of all ages. From infographics to PSA videos, RFA's educational materials are free and downloadable from our website at flushsmart.org.

These materials have been promoted across RFA channels and networks. We have also disseminated them to stakeholders within the wastewater space for use in their educational outreach.

In 2025, RFA Developed:



4
Infographics



1
Flush Smart Toolkit



8
Educational Videos



29
Flush Smart Campaign Assets

RESULTS:

#FlushSmart Month by the Numbers

Potty Training for Grownups Results

The Potty Training for Grown-Ups campaign was effective in raising awareness and engaging audiences. **Though earned media coverage remained a key goal, we shifted more resources to paid engagement this year.** We honed both paid and earned strategies to specifically target the right audiences.

We evaluated results through organic engagement metrics, paid media performance, and qualitative feedback from audience comments.

Organically, the campaign generated 5,413 post engagements and 179,456 video views across Instagram and TikTok. These organic views indicate strong audience interest and positive reception.

On the paid media front, we optimized for video views on Meta. Compared to our previous Meta campaigns, we saw a 552% increase in people who watched our videos for at least 15-seconds. **This demonstrated a significantly higher level of message retention and engagement.** Overall, paid efforts resulted in more than 5.2 million video views through Meta.

Beyond quantitative metrics, **qualitative feedback from comments provided strong evidence of message comprehension and impact.** Comments such as "checking labels is so important," "making sure I teach my littles also!", "I'll flush responsibly!", "thank you sooo much for clarifying things for me!", and "Girl, I had no idea!" solidified that the campaign successfully conveyed the importance of checking for the Do Not Flush symbol and flushing responsibly. Commenters also displayed playful surprise at the unlikely partnership between the influencers and an alliance focused on flushing, highlighting the novelty of the collaboration.

**POTTY TRAINING
FOR GROWN-UPS**

The significant increase in engaged video views and the nature of the comments strongly suggest a positive shift in audience understanding and intent regarding responsible flushing habits.

5,413

Post Engagements

179,456

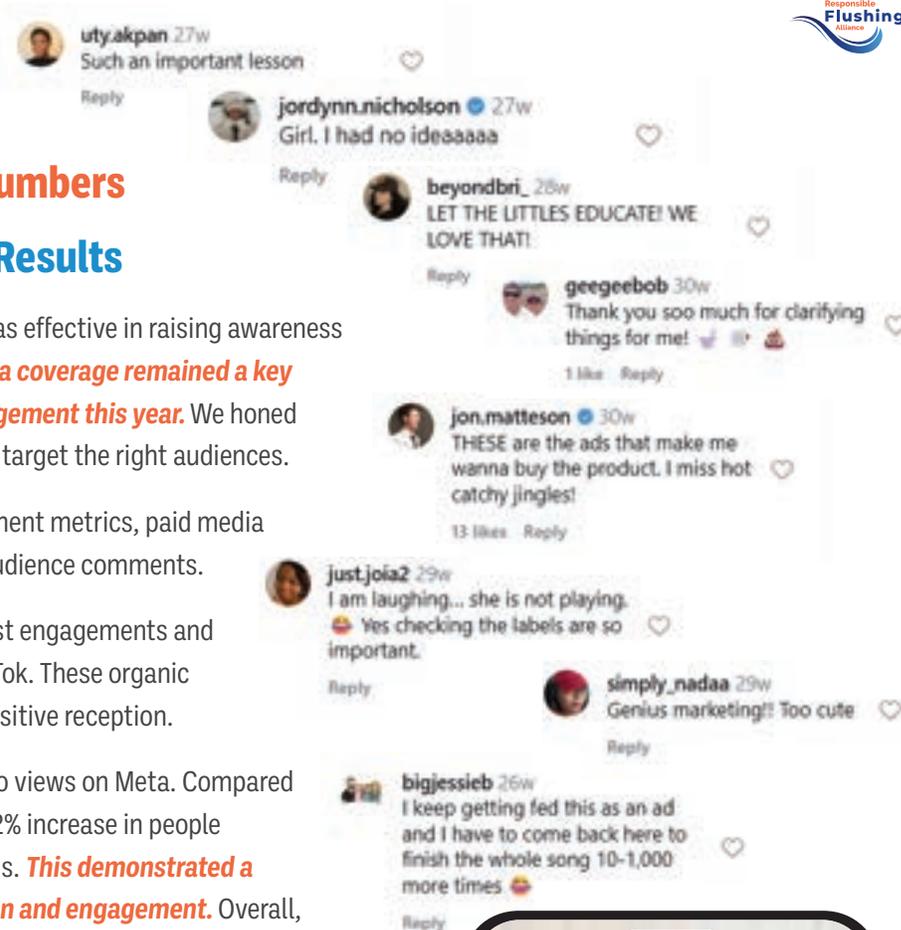
Instagram & TikTok
Video Views

552%

Increase Videos Watched
For At Least 15-Seconds

5.2 Million

Video Views Through Meta



CONSUMER SENTIMENT DATA

Drive Research has been tracking flushing habits and public knowledge for several years now on behalf of RFA. Research shows a sizeable shift in self-reported consumer knowledge and behaviors.

Specifically, we've seen a sustained, positive increase in metrics such as familiarity with the Do Not Flush symbol and perceptions on what is flushable and not flushable.

In the United States overall between March 2024 and Oct 2025,

- Familiarity and knowledge of DNF symbol increased from 78% to 81%
- Knowledge of non-flushable products (% very knowledgeable) increased from 44% to 48%
 - Percent of people who reported flushing a non-flushable item decreased from 53% to 50%
- Recall of the DNF symbol on products increased, specifically:
 - Baby wipes from 44% to 48%
 - Disinfecting and household cleaning wipes from 42% to 46%

In California between 2021 and 2025,

- Familiarity and knowledge of DNF symbol increased 69% to 82%
- Knowledge of non-flushable products (% very knowledgeable) increased from 37% to 45%
- Percent of people who flushed a non-flushable item decreased from 58% to 49%
- Recall of DNF symbol on products increased, specifically:
 - Baby wipes from 38% to 46%
 - Disinfecting and household cleaning wipes from 38% to 43%

We've seen a genuinely sizeable shift in self-reported consumer knowledge and behaviors — specifically a sustained, positive increase on metrics such as familiarity with the Do Not Flush symbol and perceptions of flushable vs. not flushable. These changes move outside the margin of error, reflecting not just temporary noise but a true, multi-year change. Moving the dial on established behaviors and perceptions across the entire general public is extremely difficult, so seeing these kinds of sustained changes is a huge victory.

- Drive Research

13%

Increase in familiarity with the DNF symbol

9%

Decrease in people reporting flushing something non-flushable

8%

Increase in recall of the DNF symbol on baby wipes

5%

Increase in recall of the DNF symbol on cleaning wipes

5%

Decrease in people mistaking baby wipes as flushable

5%

Decrease in people mistaking cleaning wipes as flushable

APPENDIX

Who Is RFA?

The Responsible Flushing Alliance is an independent, nonprofit association committed to educating consumers about responsible and smart flushing habits to help reduce damage to municipal wastewater systems.

Mission

Our mission is to provide educational solutions to problems caused by inappropriately flushed products. We work collaboratively with the wipes industry supply chain as well as wastewater, scientific, engineering, and operating entities to better understand and evaluate the scope, contents, and impacts of flushed items on wastewater infrastructure. We want to help spread knowledge regarding proper disposal practices of non-flushable wipes products through prominent, on-package displays of the Do Not Flush symbol, reminding people that if they see it, that wipe goes in the trash and never the toilet.

Supporting Members

3M, California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA), Clorox, Cotton Inc. Crocodile Cloth, Crown Abbey, DUDE Products, DUKAL, LLC., Ecolabs, Eleeo Brands, Essity, First Quality, GOJO, Goodwipes, H2O Global News, Kenvue, Kimberly-Clark, National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC), Nehemiah Manufacturing, Nice-Pak, PDI, Papel Aralar S.A., Procter & Gamble, Promescent Delay Wipes, Reckitt, Rockline Industries, Sellars Absorbent Materials, Spartan Chemical, The Center for Baby & Adult Hygiene Products (BAHP), Toilet Board Coalition, Unilever, WaterWipes.

Goals

- Clear and prominent labeling of non-flushable items and the adoption of smart flushing habits are key to helping solve the problem of wipe accumulations or clogs in wastewater treatment systems. By providing education and resources to government agencies, wastewater groups, sanitation agencies, and other stakeholder groups, together we can arm consumers with the information they need to make smart flushing decisions.
- Changes to flushing behaviors will help free up consumer tax dollars and city resources that are now used to repair wastewater systems damaged by clogs.
- To provide factual information and data on the issue to counter the high level of misinformation communicated in the media.

Our Growth Over The Years

2025 was a transition year for RFA as we strive to shift consumer flushing behavior. Over the years we have built strong general awareness for the Do Not Flush symbol and what it means. In 2025 we set our sights on digging into more consumer engagement, which gives us a deeper connection with our audiences.

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Paid Media Impressions	1500	8.4M	30.7M	47.2M	18.1M
Website Clicks	N/A	127K	167K	48K	31.9K
Video Views	N/A	N/A	12.4M	23M	8.4M
Media Mentions	N/A	1,630	2,918	4,000	684



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CONSUMER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

FLUSHSMART.ORG