

# RISK MANAGEMENT BULLETIN

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## Charles County GreaseBusters Program

In September of 2001, LGIT hosted a Sewer Backup seminar. The purpose of the seminar was to educate LGIT members on the ever present problem; sewer backups. Prior to the seminar, Charles County's Department of Utilities had already brainstormed and implemented ways to reduce the number of sewer overflows.

The Department noted that a disproportionate number of overflows were occurring in sections of the collection system that were exclusively residential, i.e. no restaurants or commercial grease sources were connected to the sewers in these areas.

Ed Gorham, Chief of Maintenance, said that "it was not an area we could regulate, so we chose to educate." A committee consisting of County employees from the Department of Utilities, Public Facilities (Recycling), and the Public Information Office created a program called "GreaseBusters". One aspect of the program is aimed at educating third grade science students throughout Charles County about grease and the problems it creates in the sewer system and septic tanks. The program uses cartoon characters named the "GreaseBusters" who fight the creepy and gooey "Grease Glob". Children learn about wastewater, sources of grease, and what they can do to help prevent a sewer backup. A central theme of the program is the SWAT technique for keeping grease out of the drains - Scrape it, Wipe it And Trash it. This concept encourages the students to scrape food from pots, pans, and plates into the trash, then wipe them with a paper towel and finally toss the paper towel into the trash where it will later decompose in the landfill.

After a one-hour interactive presentation, the children take the "GreaseBusters Pledge". The students promise to:

- ? keep grease out of the drain
- ? scrape grease from pots, plates and pans
- ? put grease in a disposable container and put the container in the trash.

The program has been a success. In 2000, Charles County reported 13 sewer overflows. In 2001, 10 overflows were reported. So far in 2002, only 6 overflows were reported. The GreaseBusters program has been presented to the County Commissioners (who were first to take the "Pledge"), then to a local Kiwanis Club, 13 elementary schools, and the 2001 and 2002 County Fair. The GreaseBusters committee has plans to expand the program with presentations to local homeowner associations and other civic organizations. They also have plans for an interactive GreaseBusters website.



For more information about the GreaseBusters Program, contact Kristy McAndrew, at (301) 609-5606.

LGIT applauds Charles County for their effort to minimize their risks and avoid potential losses.

Greasebusters Committee Members:

Karl Ott – Pretreatment Technician, Department of Utilities

Kristy McAndrew - Secretary, Department of Utilities

Leanne Shaw - Artist

Nina Voehl - Public Information Officer

Lowry Phelps - Recycle/Litter Control Superintendent, Department of Public Facilities

Ed Gorham - Chief of Maintenance, Department of Utilities

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*Reports\RMB\RMB88lsm*