



South Bayside System Authority

Providing wastewater services to residents and businesses in Redwood City, San Carlos, Belmont, and West Bay Sanitary District

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SBSA BULLETIN

Summer 2009

Manager's Corner

By Daniel Child, SBSA Manager

Use of Garbage Disposals Has Positive Impacts on SBSA System



The use of garbage disposals has positive impacts on the SBSA wastewater treatment system. For years disposals have been labeled as being bad, when the truth is, for SBSA, they are very beneficial and one of the most practical and cost effective ways of recycling.

Food scraps make up approximately 30% of the waste that ends up getting buried at area landfills, which is why a growing number of wastewater treatment facilities are encouraging the use of garbage disposals and solid waste collectors are urging the public to separate their food wastes for composting. Some communities, like San Carlos, have begun collecting food waste with yard waste from single family residents in order to keep it from landfills.



From the SBSA perspective, using your garbage disposal is beneficial for the treatment facility and the environment.

The premise behind the proper use of a disposal is to effectively regard food scraps as liquid (averaging 70% water, like human waste), and utilize existing infrastructure (underground sewers and wastewater treatment plants) for its management. Modern wastewater plants like SBSA are effective at processing and breaking down the organic solids into stable products (known as biosolids) and capturing methane for use in co-generation facilities that produce energy and offset the overall cost of power for the treatment process.

In fact, SBSA currently produces about 30% of the power needed to operate the treatment plant and hopes to increase that amount by encouraging residents to dispose of their food wastes, except cooking grease, through their garbage disposals. You will be seeing more information in the local media promoting this practice in the near future.

The wealth of research regarding disposals first and foremost concludes that municipal sewers and wastewater systems effectively

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treat ground food. Decades of research and widespread use of disposals also support the role the appliances play in diverting food waste from collection trucks, landfills and incinerators – drastically reducing the carbon footprint of these processes!

Disposals go by many names around the world – garburators in Canada, garbage grinders in Japan are just two examples. But whatever you call them, more than two dozen communities all over the globe have studied the issue of how using food waste disposals affects sewer systems and the environment, and concluded that they don't harm the former and actually can benefit the latter. These studies are summarized at: www.insinkerator.com/environmental/wastewater_treatment.shtml and at www.insinkerator.com/pdf/Summary_of_Research_2006.pdf .

New York City once banned food waste disposals in areas served by combined storm and sanitary sewers. But the City Council directed the city's Department of Environmental Protection to conduct a 21-month pilot project that studied the impacts of using disposals on the environment, public health and the cost of operating the water and sewer system. Among the issues examined were the impact of grease and food solids on sewers, the impact on water consumption and the impact of possible increased pollutant loading on receiving waters. The study concluded that the impact of food waste disposals in any of these areas was "de minimus," and the previous ban was overturned. Read more here: www.insinkerator.com/pdf/grinders.pdf

For SBSA, there are huge benefits – so from our perspective, use your garbage disposals properly, and you benefit our operations and the environment!