

SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact Gage Harter.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Stafford County Government
Program Title: The Utilities Department Develops a Superhero Captain Clog" to Educate the Public
Program Category: Environmental

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Donna Krauss
Title: Deputy County Administrator
Signature: Donna S. Krauss

Title: The Utilities Department Develops a Superhero “Captain Clog” to Educate the Public

Executive Summary

The Stafford County Utilities Department initially created a superhero theme for the annual FOG (fats, oils, and grease) campaign to increase awareness about how residents can help protect the sanitary sewer system. The main character, Captain Clog, was used on billboards, social media posts, and videos for the FOG campaign. Since then, he has become a vehicle to communicate various awareness and outreach topics.

The Problem or Need for the Program

There are many sanitary sewer overflows and issues that arise from the improper disposal of FOG (fats, oils and grease) and the flushing of wipes. \$1.6 million is spent annually by Stafford County on preventive and removal efforts due to the improper disposal of FOG and wipes in the sanitary sewer system. The Utilities Department needed a way to communicate this to the public in a more attention-grabbing way. You only have a few seconds to get someone’s attention as they drive by a billboard or scroll social media, and the hope was that the character of Captain Clog would draw people in to read the important messages then.

Description of the Program

The Captain Clog character was developed for Utilities-related communications to educate the public about protecting the wastewater system in a more fun and relatable way. In addition to the FOG (fats, oils, and grease) campaign, the character was also used in campaigns about not flushing wipes. In April 2023, the Utilities Department was invited to participate in an Earth Day

event for all the elementary school students in Stafford County. A comic book illustrating both the water and wastewater treatment processes was created to give to each student in attendance.

In October 2023, the comic books were also passed out at a community event called National Night Out. A Captain Clog baseball card was created to distribute along with the comic books, with a message not to pour grease down the drain. At both events, large posters were set up depicting Captain Clog and his FOG message. More characters have now been introduced to the world of Captain Clog, such as the villain Greaseball, who represents FOG, and Agent Chlorine, the hero ensuring clean drinking water.

Expanding and Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

With the release of the first edition of the Captain Clog comic book, another superhero was introduced: Agent Chlorine, depicted as a woman of color. She represents the important chemical used to disinfect drinking water in the water treatment process. Stafford County is a very diverse region, and the community events that the Utilities Department attended had many ethnicities in attendance. We decided to diversify the Captain Clog characters.

The Cost of the Program

- \$824 – Captain Clog FOG Billboard in Nov. and Dec. 2023
- \$1,947.38 – Comic Books to be given out at outreach events

- \$100 – Boosting the Captain Clog video on Facebook
- \$0 – Graphic Design – We used our inhouse designer.

The Results/Success of the Program

The desired outcome of the FOG and no wipes campaigns is through education to reduce the number of sanitary sewer overflows and the maintenance costs from the removal of FOG and wipes. It is the hope that, as this kind of outreach continues, the Utilities Department will see measurable positive change in the County's sewer system over time.

The Utilities Department used the Captain Clog materials to educate a large number of local residents at the two large-scale community events it participated in during 2023. National Night Out had approximately 5,000 attendees, and the Earth Day event hosted nearly 1,000 local elementary students.

As well, our Captain Clog posts have had a strong response across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor. The metrics indicate he has become a recognizable character that people are interested in.

Fulfilling Criteria

The Stafford County Utilities Department has developed brand recognition through the superhero Captain Clog, who has now become a recognizable mascot for the Department.

What began as a singular campaign about FOG, has turned into a full brand for the Department.

The comic book theme makes the content accessible and easy to understand for children. The youth of today are an important demographic to reach when it comes to creating change at home, as children often encourage their families to break the cycle of improper habits such as pouring grease down the drain and flushing wipes.

Furthermore, Captain Clog is an innovative way to tell a somewhat icky story and communicate a very important topic. It helped the residents understand what we are asking of them in a clear and simple way. The program also fostered intergovernmental cooperation because Utilities had to communicate with Community Engagement to create and disseminate the information.

Supplemental Materials:

- Comic Book (Attached)
- Billboard design 2023 (Attached)
- Video – [“All you need to know about FOG”](#)

SPECIAL EDITION

#1



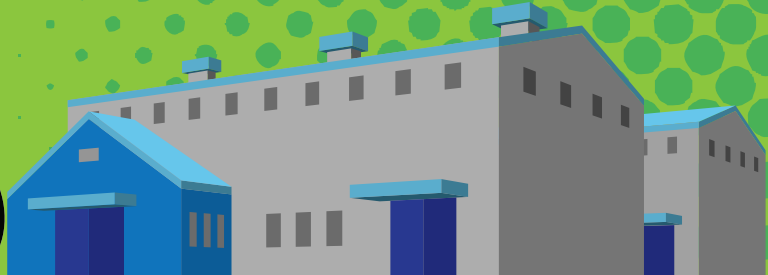
**LEARN ABOUT
YOUR WATER
WITH
CAPTAIN CLOG!**

Brought to you by:

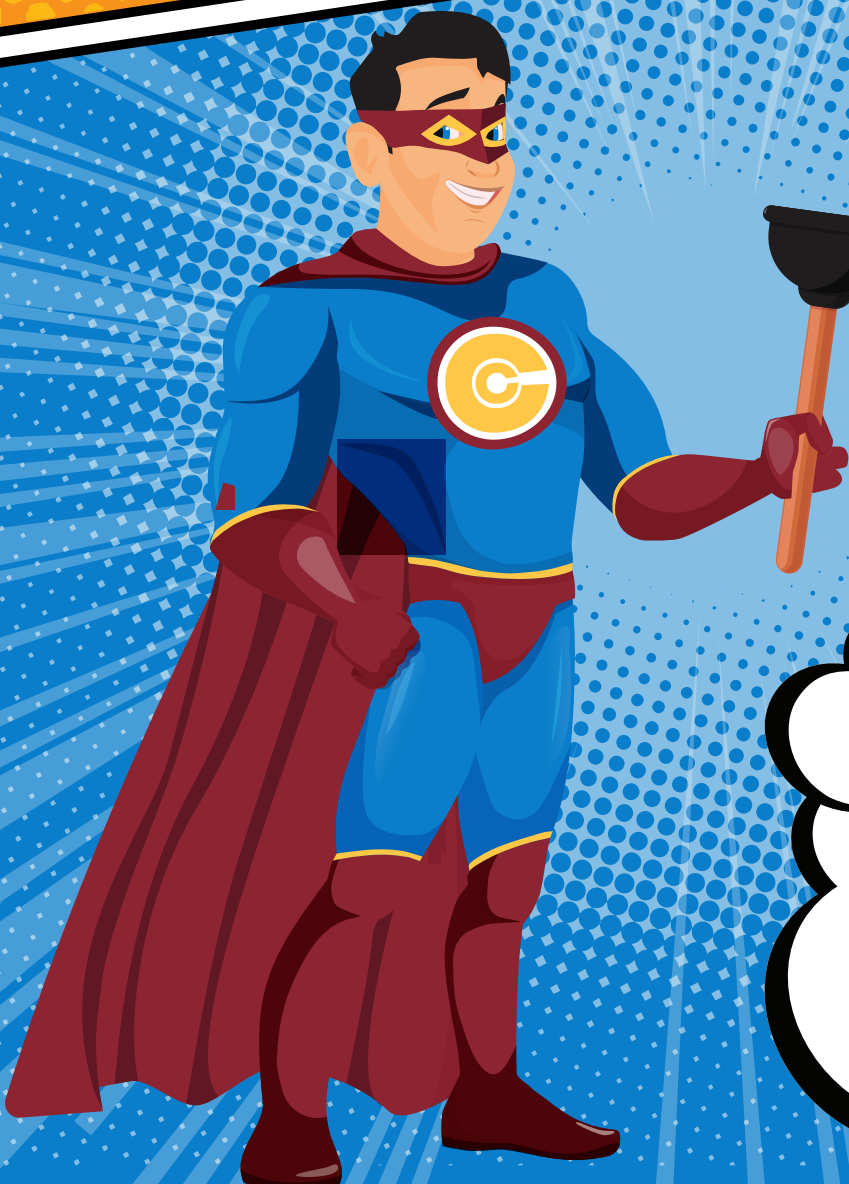
UTILITIES
STAFFORD
Virginia

FREE!
Coloring
Pages!

Our journey begins at the water treatment plant...

A large, multi-story industrial building with several windows and blue accents, situated on a green lawn. The background is a green field with a pattern of small green circles.

Captain Clog
will be our
guide!

A superhero character with a blue suit, red cape, and red mask. He has a yellow and red circular emblem on his chest with a white 'C' and a plunger. He is holding a black plunger in his right hand. The background is a blue field with a pattern of small white dots and radiating lines.

Stafford County
works hard every
day to ensure you
have clean water!

Stafford County has **2** water treatment plants at Lake Mooney and Smith Lake.

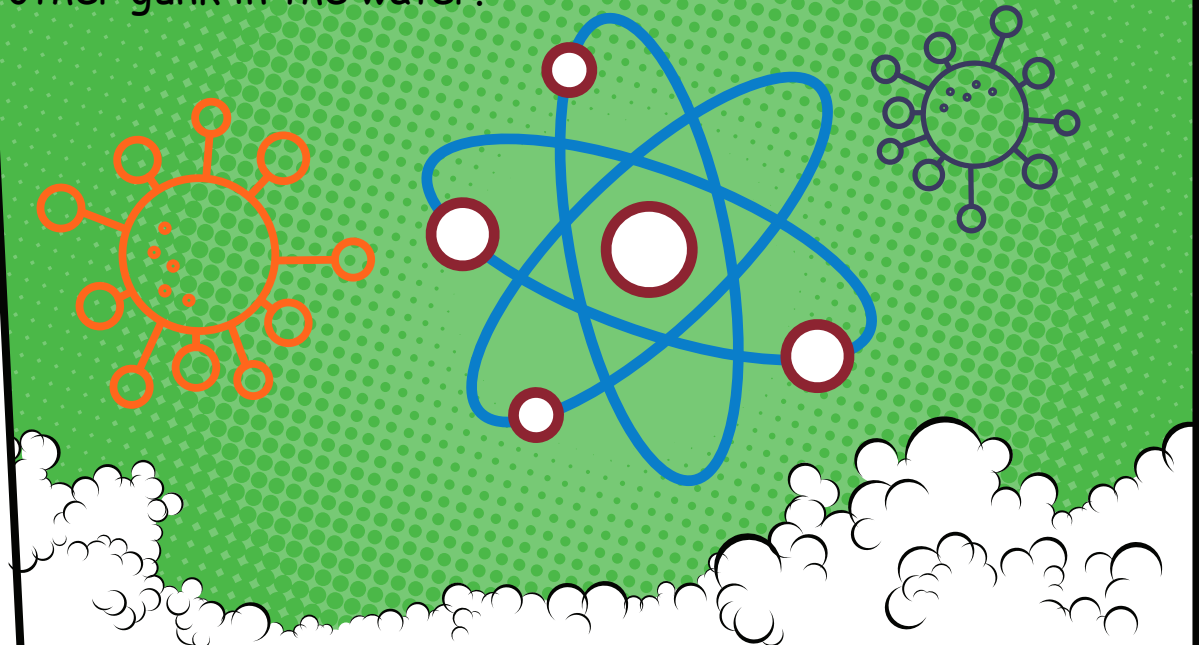
Stafford County treats almost **4 billion gallons** of water a year!

There are nearly **700 miles** of pipes that bring water to homes and businesses.

1

**Step 1:
Get Rid of
Solids in the
Water!**

As the water comes in from the lakes, chemicals are added to help form large, heavy particles from sand and other gunk in the water.



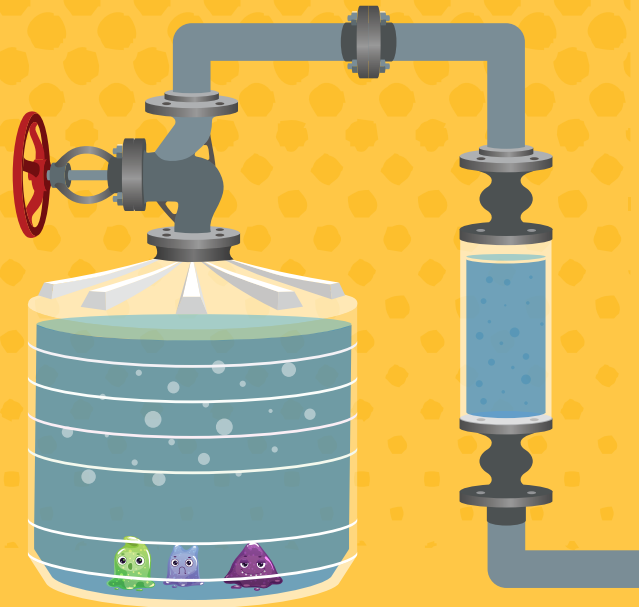
2

Step 2: Remove All the Bad Stuff

The large, heavy bits fall to the bottom of the tank while the clear water stays at the top.



The clear water flows into the next tank for the next cleaning step.



3

Step 3: First Cleaning with Chlorine

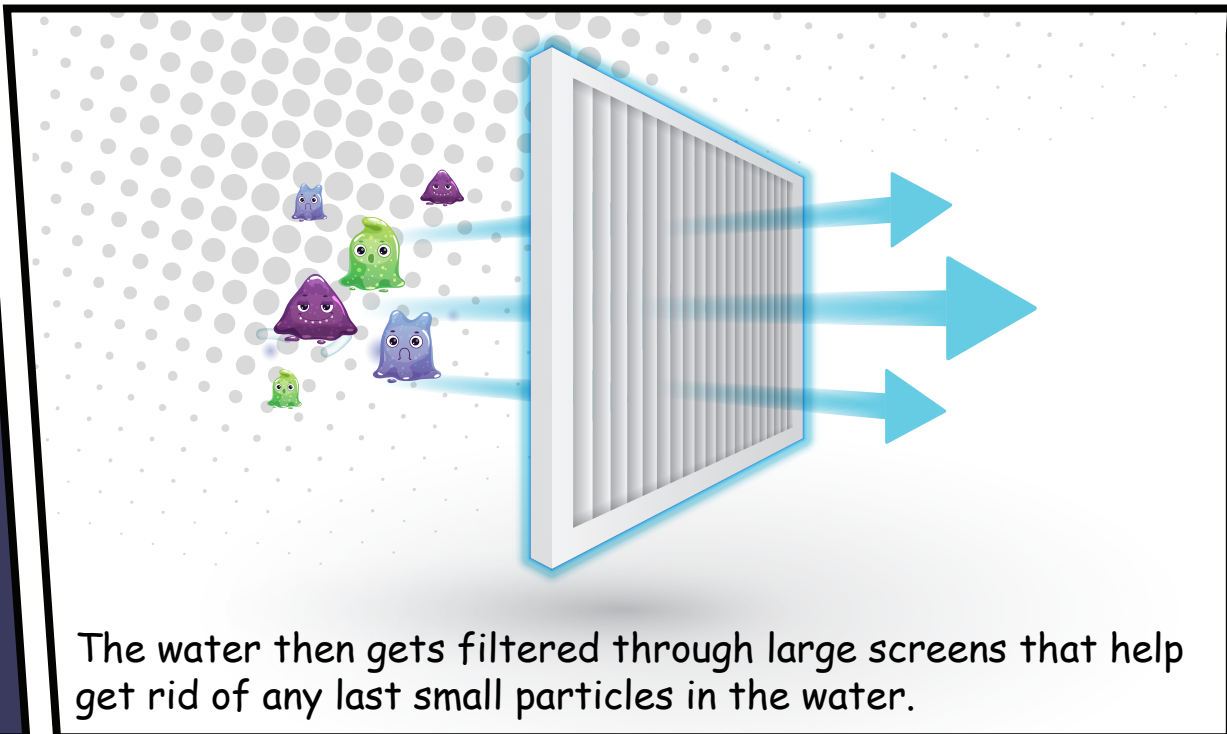
We then clean the water by adding chlorine (the chemical used in a swimming pool but more powerful)



The chlorine fights off and kills any bacteria and viruses that shouldn't be in the water.

4

Step 4: Filtration

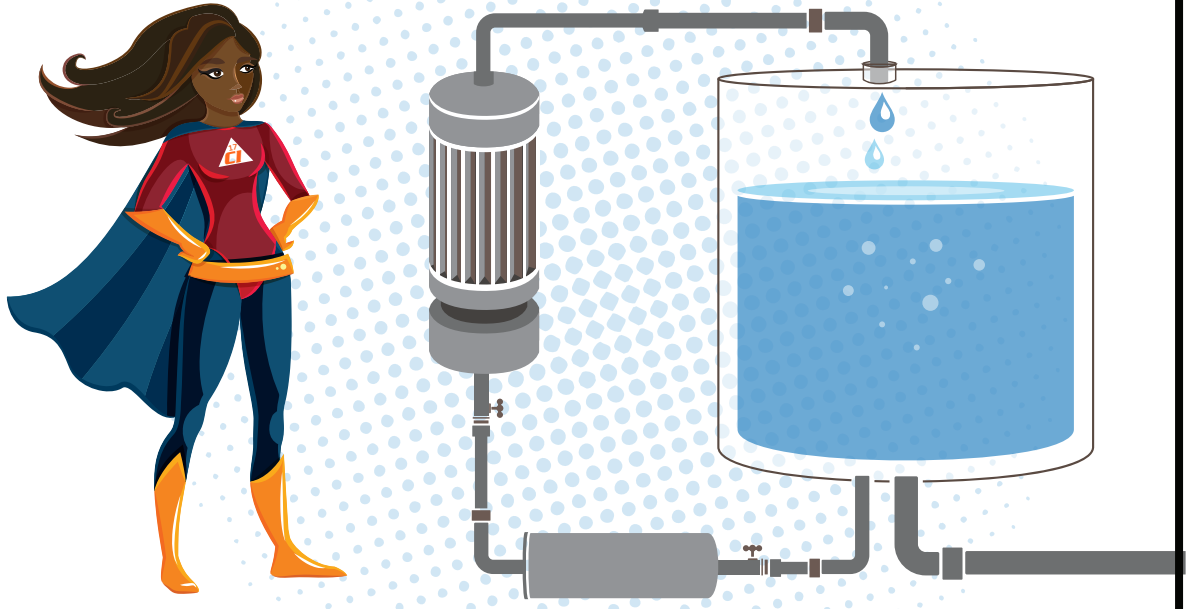


The water then gets filtered through large screens that help get rid of any last small particles in the water.

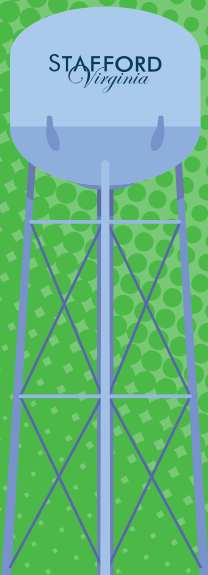
5

Step 5: Finishing

At the end, we add some more chlorine to the filtered water to make sure nothing comes back into your water.



Other products are added to help support dental health and protect the water pipes in your home.



Now that your water is clean, it goes from the plant to the water tower, straight into your home!



The second part of our journey begins at your house...

From a sink full of dirty dishes, to laundry, to the toilet to the bathtub and shower...all that dirty water needs to be cleaned.



Stafford County has **2** super efficient wastewater plants!

Stafford County treats **10 million** gallons of polluted water a day from **40,000** homes and businesses.

There are more than **500 miles** of underground pipes carrying wastewater to plants.



1.6 gallons per flush

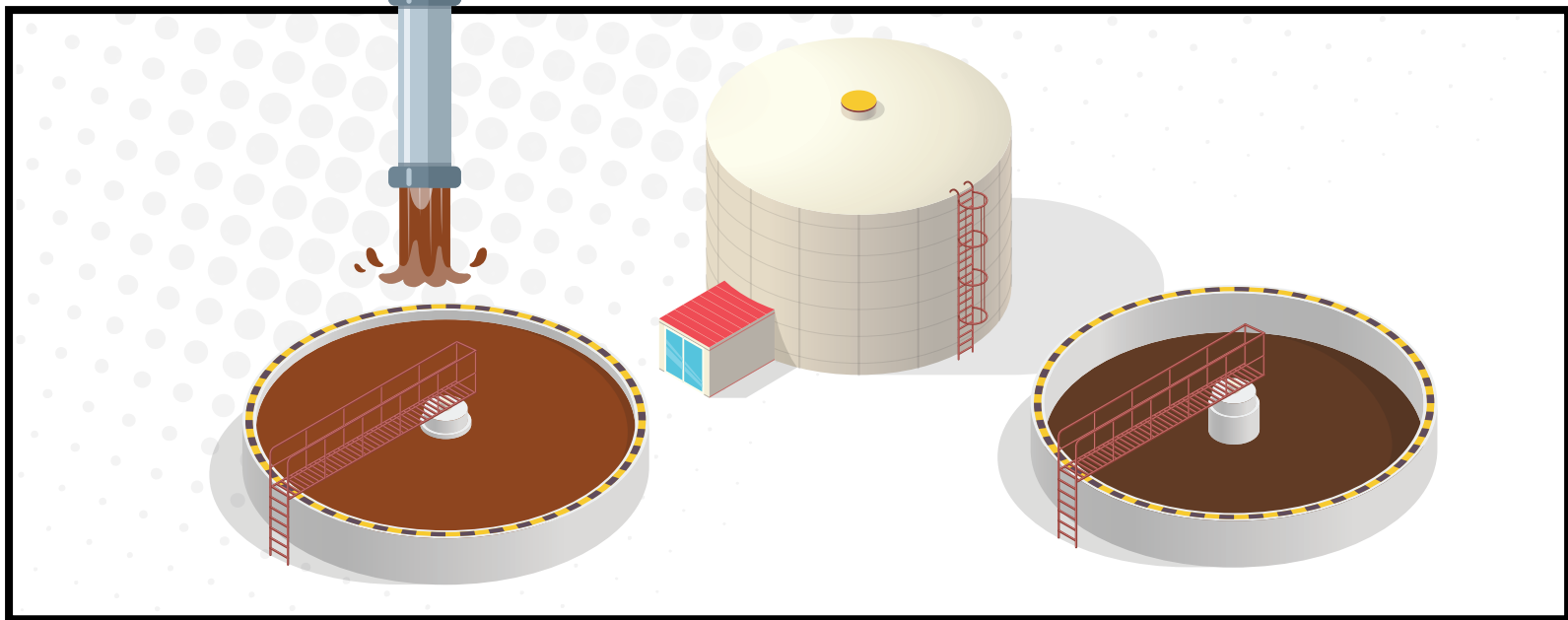


5 gallons per minute

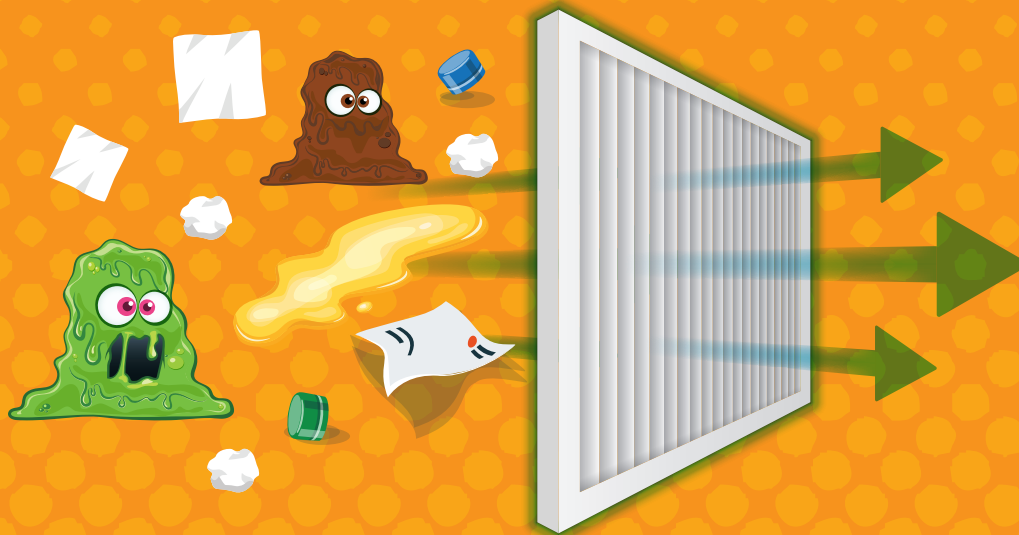


40 gallons per load

The dirty water enters the Wastewater Treatment Facility...



Step 1: Screens remove things that shouldn't be in the water.



Never flush wipes, food or trash down the toilet!

Step 2: Good bacteria eat the solids like super heroes!



Step 3: Bubbling air helps the bacteria do its job and separates the solid

Step 4: Sludge settles at the bottom and are removed from the good water.



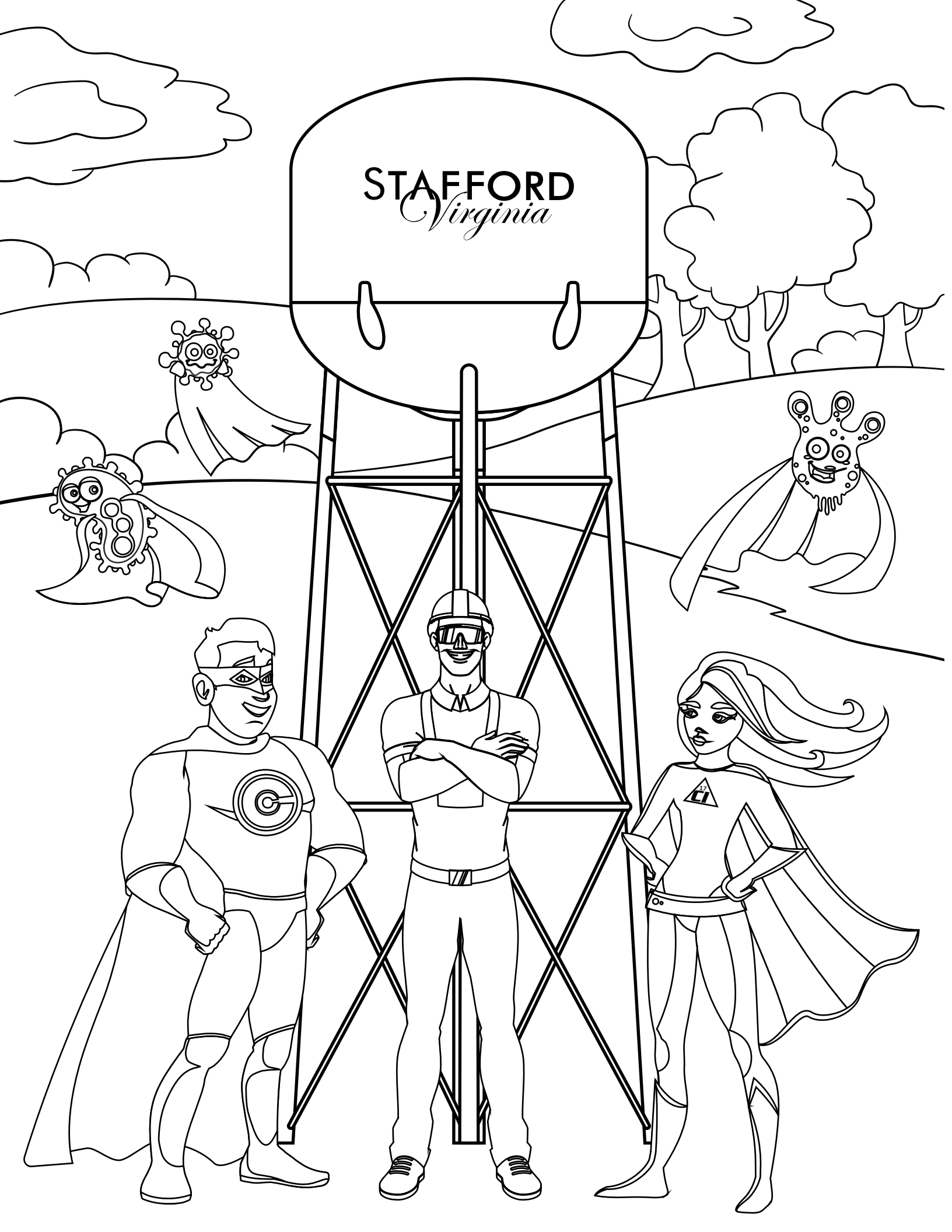
Step 5: Filters remove any remaining solids and high powered ultra violet lights kill remaining bacteria and viruses.



Now the water is safe to return to the environment.



STAFFORD
Virginia





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<https://utilities.staffordcountyva.gov>

STORE IT, DON'T POUR IT



***CLOGS ARE A PAIN,
DON'T PUT GREASE
DOWN YOUR DRAIN!***



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www.staffordcountyva.gov/FOG