Flush forward

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sew´·ẽr sō·ci·ol´ō·gy, *the science of society, social institutions, and social relationships viewed through the eyes of a sewer; specifically, the systematic study of the development, structure, interaction, and collective sewer use of organized groups of human beings.*

Most sewer flows are characterized by repeatable diurnal patterns that vary across weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Differences in land use also are apparent, and distractions and disruptions of daily life often can be observed.

This month, we take a look at daylight saving time through the eyes of a sewer.

Most Americans enjoy the benefits of daylight saving time, but those benefits come with an annual annoyance – setting the clock ahead and losing one hour of much needed sleep. Personal experience suggests that it takes a little while for the biological clock to reset. Sewer Sociology wanted to know more and set out to investigate.

The figure shows four composite hydrographs of sewer use from a residential area in Southern California on the first four days of daylight saving time in 2012. Typical weekday flows are shown in green, typical weekend flows are shown in light blue, and the days of interest are shown in red.

While residents reset their clocks on Sunday morning – or Saturday night – it appears that they do not adjust their actual schedules until Sunday evening. Monday morning reveals a slight decrease in sewer use, suggesting some people have difficulty getting up on time for work or school. Monday and Tuesday evenings show slight delays in sewer use, suggesting that residents initially get out and enjoy the extra hour of daylight. By Wednesday, the sewer use pattern returns to normal, indicating that the biological clock appears to have adjusted to its new schedule.

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Sewer use patterns following transition from standard time to daylight saving time