

Household Tips to Avoid Septic System Troubles

Septic systems can provide long-term, effective treatment of household wastewater if properly designed, constructed, and maintained.

Use Water Efficiently!

- Install low-flow showerheads and sink aerators.
- Take shorter showers; use less water for baths.
- Make sure all faucets are completely turned off when not in use.
- Maintain your plumbing to eliminate leaks.
- Run the dishwasher and clothes washer only when you have full loads.
- Replace old dishwashers, toilets, and clothes washers with high-efficiency models.

Get to know your system. It is recommended that most systems be inspected annually and pumped every 3-5 years. However, individual system needs may vary depending on the size and age of the system, the number of people it serves, and the system's past performance.

Use water efficiently. Toilet use accounts for approximately 25 percent of household water use. Older toilets use 3.5-5 gallons of water per flush, while newer high-efficiency toilets use 1.6 gallons or fewer. If your toilet is not high-efficiency, retrofitting it can be as easy as placing a water displacement bag inside the toilet tank to reduce the amount of water used per flush.

Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.

Oil-based paints, solvents, and large volumes of toxic cleaners should not enter your septic system. Even latex paint cleanup waste should be minimized. Some cleaning products may be harmful as well. Pouring drain cleaners, anti-bacterial soaps, or other household cleaners into your system may harm its helpful bacteria that treat wastewater before it enters the ground. Instead, bring these wastes to your county or township hazardous waste disposal day.

Reduce or eliminate the use of a

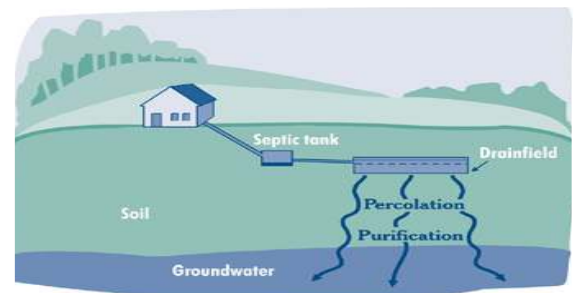
garbage disposal. Using a garbage disposal adds grease and solids to the septic tank. Some of these materials are broken down by bacterial action; however, the grindings that are not broken down decrease system efficiency and increase the pumping frequency.

Treat your drainfield properly.

Your drainfield is the area on your property where wastewater is discharged from the septic tank for further treatment by the soil. Conserve water in order to protect the drainfield. If the drainfield is overloaded with too much wastewater it may flood, cause backups into plumbing fixtures, or reduce treatment of the wastewater. Maintaining the drainfield above the surface is just as important. Do not drive or park on the drainfield, and plant only shallow-rooted vegetation over and near the septic system to avoid damage from plant roots.

Keep records of maintenance.

Use your "Homeowner Septic System Maintenance Record" to track inspections, repairs, pumpings, and other system maintenance activities. Keeping good records will help you to become familiar with your system's needs and determine when to inspect and pump your system.



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