

Tips to Avoid Trouble

Do

- √ Use water efficiently to avoid overloading the system. Use low-flow shower heads and faucets; run the dishwasher and laundry only when full; turn off the faucet when brushing your teeth, washing your face, and shaving; and inspect for and repair plumbing leaks.
- √ Use alternative cleaning materials, such as baking soda, around the home in order to avoid clogging your system.
- √ Care for your drainfield. Plant only shallow-rooted plants, over and near your drainfield to avoid damage from roots. Don't drive or park on the drainfield.
- √ Inspect and pump your system regularly. Individual system needs may vary; keep records of maintenance and become familiar with your system's needs.

Don't

- ⊘ Don't use your system as a trash can; don't put nondegradables, such as feminine sanitary products, or materials containing metals, down your toilets or drains!
- ⊘ Don't use harsh chemical drain openers for a clogged drain. Instead, use boiling water or a drain snake to open clogs.
- ⊘ Don't use septic system additives; they are unnecessary.
- ⊘ Don't use antibacterial cleansers; these may harm the bacteria that treat the wastewater in your system.
- ⊘ Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.

Signs of Septic System Failure

- Pooling water or muddy soil around your septic system or in your basement.
- Strips of bright green grass over the drainfield on your lawn.
- Slowly draining or backed up toilets and sinks.
- Sewage odors.
- Unpleasant taste and odor to well water.
- Visible sewage or noticeable sewage odor in streams or other bodies of water.

Some Causes of Septic System Failure

- Household toxics poured down the drain, including oil-based paints and wood stains.
- Large amounts of household cleaners poured down the drain. Cleaners can vary in toxicity. Terms like "Nontoxic" and "Septic Safe" can be deceiving; regardless of labeling, use only small amounts to none.
- Excessive use of the system. Septic systems are designed to handle a certain amount of water. Inefficient water use can overload the system.
- Incorrect siting or design of the system.
- Insufficient or improper maintenance.

A Residential Guide to Septic System Management and Maintenance

Updated February 2007

A RESIDENTIAL GUIDE TO SEPTIC SYSTEM MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

DON'T LET YOUR MONEY GO DOWN THE DRAIN!



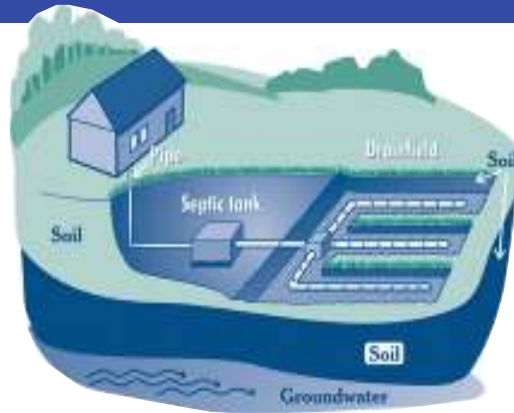
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Where, Oh Where, Does Our Wastewater Go?

“Out of Sight, Out of Mind” is the attitude many of us have when it comes to flushing the toilet, draining the bathtub or running the dishwasher. But all of that wastewater must go somewhere! That “somewhere” may be an onsite wastewater treatment system, commonly known as a septic system. As a homeowner, it is your responsibility to care for your septic system.

How Do I Know If I Have a Septic System, and Where Can I Find It?

If you have a septic system, the tank and drainfield should be clearly designated on the “as-built” drawing for your home. You may also see lids or manhole covers for your septic tank. Older tanks are often hard to find because there are no visible parts. An inspector/pumper can help you locate your septic system if it has no visible locaters.



Now That I've Found My Septic System, What Is It and How Does It Work?

A septic system consists of four main components: the pipe, the tank, the drainfield, and the soil. A pipe from the home carries wastewater to the septic tank, where treatment begins as solids settle to the bottom and are digested by microorganisms such as bacteria. As new wastewater enters the tank, the partially treated wastewater is pushed along into the drainfield for further treatment. The water is then distributed to perforated pipes for further treatment by the soil.

Percolation into the soil provides final treatment of wastewater by removing harmful bacteria, viruses and nutrients. Suitable soil is necessary for successful wastewater treatment.

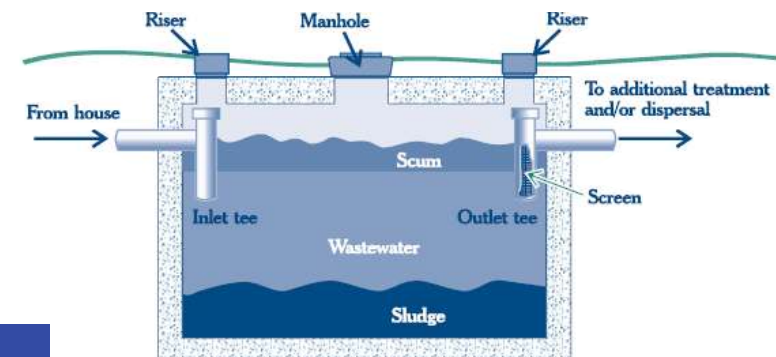
Why Should I Maintain My Septic System?

A well maintained system saves you money and protects your drinking water and the natural environment.

Neglect or abuse of your septic system can cause it to fail and cost money for system repairs or replacement. An improperly cared for system could also result in decreased property value.

If you have a septic system, you may also have a well for drinking water. Proper maintenance of your septic system will prevent contaminants in wastewater from entering your water supply.

Any contaminant coming from your system may eventually enter groundwater, streams, and other water sources. This may harm the wildlife that rely on those water sources and make the water unfit for drinking, swimming, or fishing. To prevent this from occurring, ensure that you properly maintain your system!



**BE GOOD TO YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM AND
IT WILL BE GOOD TO YOU!**