

# **Septic System Management and Maintenance**

courtesy of Clean Septic Pumping

## **Is Your Septic System Working Properly?**

Unfortunately, if house fixtures drain well, many people are not concerned about whether their septic system is working properly. They don't realize that untreated sewage can be a health hazard

## **What Maintenance Has Been Done?**

Before planning a maintenance program, find out what maintenance has already been done. If you are buying an existing home, ask the seller a few important questions such as:

- How old is the system?
- When was the tank last pumped?
- How frequently has it been pumped?
- Have there been signs of possible failure?
- Have there been additions made to the house that would necessitate increasing the size of the system?

If the house has just been built, ask the septic system contractor to provide you an "as built" diagram that may show details not on the permit. Proper care of your septic system requires day-to-day management as well as periodic maintenance and repairs.

## **Day to Day Management**

### **Don't Use too Much Water**

- The drainfield does not have unlimited capacity.
- The typical daily water use is 50 gallons per person.
- The soil drainfield has a maximum design capacity of 120 gallons per bedroom. When near capacity, systems may not work.
- Overloads can occur seasonally or daily.
- Water conservation will extend the life of your system.

### **Limit Disposal Sewage**

- Don't use your septic tank as a trash can for cigarette butts, tissues, sanitary napkins, cotton swabs, cat box litter, coffee grinds, or disposable diapers.
- Restrict the use of your garbage disposal.
- Don't put grease or cooking oil into the system.
- Don't poison your system with harmful chemicals such as solvents, oils, paints, thinners, disinfectants, pesticides, poisons, and other substances. They can kill bacteria that help purify sewage and can also contaminate groundwater.
- Save money. Commercial septic tank additives are not necessary. The bacteria needed for partially decomposing the tank solids are naturally present in sewage. Even if you use additives, you will still need to pump the solids out of your tank.

**Clean Septic Pumping**

Tollfree 1-855-588-4282

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## Protect the System from Physical Damage

- Keep the soil over the drainfield covered with vegetation, not trees, to prevent soil erosion.
- Don't drive heavy vehicles over the system.
- Avoid construction over the system and repair area.
- Maintain the natural shape of the land immediately downslope of the system, and protect this area from excavation (cutting and filling).
- Don't cover the tank or drainfield with asphalt or concrete.

## Dispose of all Waste Water in an Approved System

- Don't put in a separate pipe to carry wash waters to a side ditch or the woods. This **graywater** contains germs that can spread disease.

Preventive Maintenance Record			
Date	Work Done	Firm	Cost

Your Septic System Installer
Name
Address
Phone
Date System Installed
Your Septic System Pumper
Name
Address
Phone

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## **Periodic Repair and Maintenance**

### **Home and Yard**

- Repair dripping faucets and toilets.
- Cut down and remove trees that like wet conditions. Treat the stumps to prevent further growth.
- Landscape the yard to divert surface waters away from the tank and drainfield.
- Be sure that the water from the roof, gutters, and foundation drains does not flow over the system.
- Install an interceptor ditch, if needed.
- Maintain drainage ditches, subsurface tiles, and drainage outlets so that water can flow freely.

### **Septic Tank**

- Install a concrete riser (or manhole) over the tank if it is buried 6 inches or deeper, to provide easy access for measuring and pumping solids.
- Keep track of how quickly sludge and scum accumulate in the tank.
- Have solids pumped out of the tank as needed.
- Don't wait until your drainfield fails to have your tank pumped. By then, the drainfield may be ruined. With septic systems, an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure!

### **Signs of Possible Septic Problems**

- Sewage backing up into your toilets, tubs, or sinks.
- Slowly draining fixtures; particularly after it has rained.
- The smell of raw sewage accompanied by extremely soggy soil over sewage discharged over the ground or in nearby ditches or woods. Note, in the LPP system sewage may come to the ground surface when the pump is turned on and then disappear after the pump turns off.
- Broken or cracked white pipes that stick out of the ground in a LPP system.
- An alarm flashing (red light) or beeping in the house, space, or in the yard indicating a pump is not working properly.
- An increase in infections or illnesses associated with swimming in lakes or rivers next to the system.
- Water test results indicating the presence of biological contamination or organic chemical contamination in the groundwater under the system.

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