



## How do I maintain my septic system?

Although some septic problems may seem insoluble, most can be resolved, or at least remedied, by practicing the following maintenance concepts.

### **Know the location of your tank and drainfield.**

Environmental Services may have records, so may the prior owner, contractor, or architect.

### **Pump your tank regularly.**

Solids accumulate differently depending on use, but a good place to start is every two to three years, or when the sludge level is twelve (12) to eighteen (18) inches in depth. After your first pumping, your licensed pumper can tell you how often your system should be serviced. **Both** compartments should be pumped, and **all** solids removed. Systems that incorporate pumps and pump tanks should be inspected by a licensed pumper. In addition, be sure the pumper checks the inlet and outlet baffles for good condition. [Broken baffles should be replaced by more reliable "Sanitary T" plumbing. Note: Gases make entering a septic tank dangerous.

### **Pump and non-conventional systems**

Mechanical and electrical components (pump, valves, valve boxes, control panel, alarm, etc.) should occasionally be reviewed by a knowledgeable professional.

### **Minimize liquid load**

Studies have indicated that you can reduce your water use by half to two-thirds (2/3) with the following methods and save money on water, well-pump electricity, and hot water costs.

### **Avoid over-occupancy**

Current septic systems are sized for two people per legal bedroom and continuous use above that occupancy level may strain or exceed your systems' capabilities and/or shorten its life span.

### **Repair leaky faucets and toilets**

Toilets can be checked for less obvious leaks by adding food dye to the toilet tank. If color appears in the bowl later without flushing, the tank mechanism

may need repair or replacement. Severe leaks can lose hundreds of gallons per day.

### Recycling washers

If your system really has problems, laundry should be done elsewhere, or perhaps discharged into a separate approved disposal system. For marginal systems, dish and laundry washing machines with a suds saver cycle divert the final rinse water into the next wash cycle, saving water, energy costs, and septic system capacity.

### Remove discharging type water softener from the system

This will decrease water use and avoid possible damage to your soil structure by the brine solution. Use a rechargeable softener or a separate, small sump for brine discharge.

### Others

- a. Take short showers instead of a bath.
- b. Use stoppered sink basins; do not let water run while doing dishes, brushing teeth, washing sinks, etc.
- c. Do full laundry loads, preferably on **different** days so as not to flood the system all at once.
- d. Reroute rain gutter and drainage away from septic system area to avoid over-saturation.

Do not discharge any liquid wastes, including sink or laundry, on the ground surface or in waterways. **ALL** wastewater must be discharged into an approved septic tank and disposal system.

### Minimize Solids load

A good rule of thumb is not to put anything into the tank that can be legally disposed of another way. Put in only human waste, toilet paper, water, and household chemicals in amounts normally used for cleaning (i.e. detergents, bleach, etc.).

<b>DO NOT FLUSH:</b>	
<i>Coffee grinds</i>	<i>paper towels</i>
<i>dental floss</i>	<i>egg shells</i>
<i>disposable diapers</i>	<i>vegetable peels</i>
<i>kitty litter</i>	
<i>tampons</i>	
<i>sanitary napkins</i>	
<i>cigarette butts</i>	
<i>condoms</i>	
<i>fat, grease, or oil</i>	
<i>paper towels</i>	
<b>and hazardous chemicals, such as:</b>	
<i>paints</i>	<i>photographic solutions</i>
<i>varnishes</i>	<i>pesticides</i>
<i>thinners</i>	<i>waste oils</i>