

ON-SITE SEWAGE PROGRAM



**For An Individual
On-Site Sewage System
(Septic System)**

Owners Name: _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Parcel Number _____

Permit Number _____

Pass On To Next User/Owner

Important Phone Numbers & Other Information

Use this page to record important phone numbers and other information related to installation and maintenance of your on-site sewage system.



Phone Numbers

Health District	
On-Site Sewage System Installer:	
On-Site Sewage System Designer:	
On-Site Sewage System Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Contractor:	
Pumping Contractor:	



Other Information

Tax Identification Number
Design/Permit Memo No.

About Your Septic System

A homeowner's septic system (also called an on-site sewage disposal system) is an individual system that settles, treats, and disposes of household wastes such as soapy water from the laundry and bath, discarded food scraps, and body wastes.

On-site sewage disposal systems are used in country and remote settings where public sewer treatment plants are not practical. There are many different types of septic systems that can fit a wide range of soil and site conditions.

How Your Septic Tank Works

Try this experiment. Take a cup of cold water and add a couple tablespoons each of flour and cooking oil. Shake the mixture vigorously. This mixture represents the waste stream as it leaves your house and enters the septic tank (Figure A). Now allow the mixture to rest undisturbed for at least 15 minutes. Note that the flour will settle out on the bottom of the container and oil will accumulate in a layer on top of the water (Figure B).

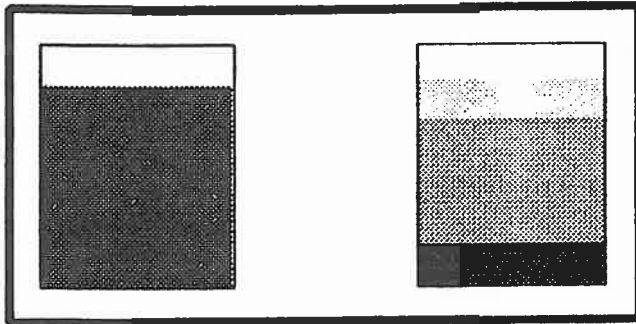


Figure A

Figure B

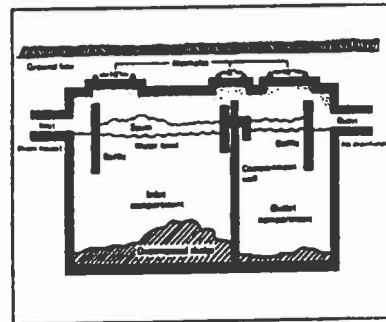
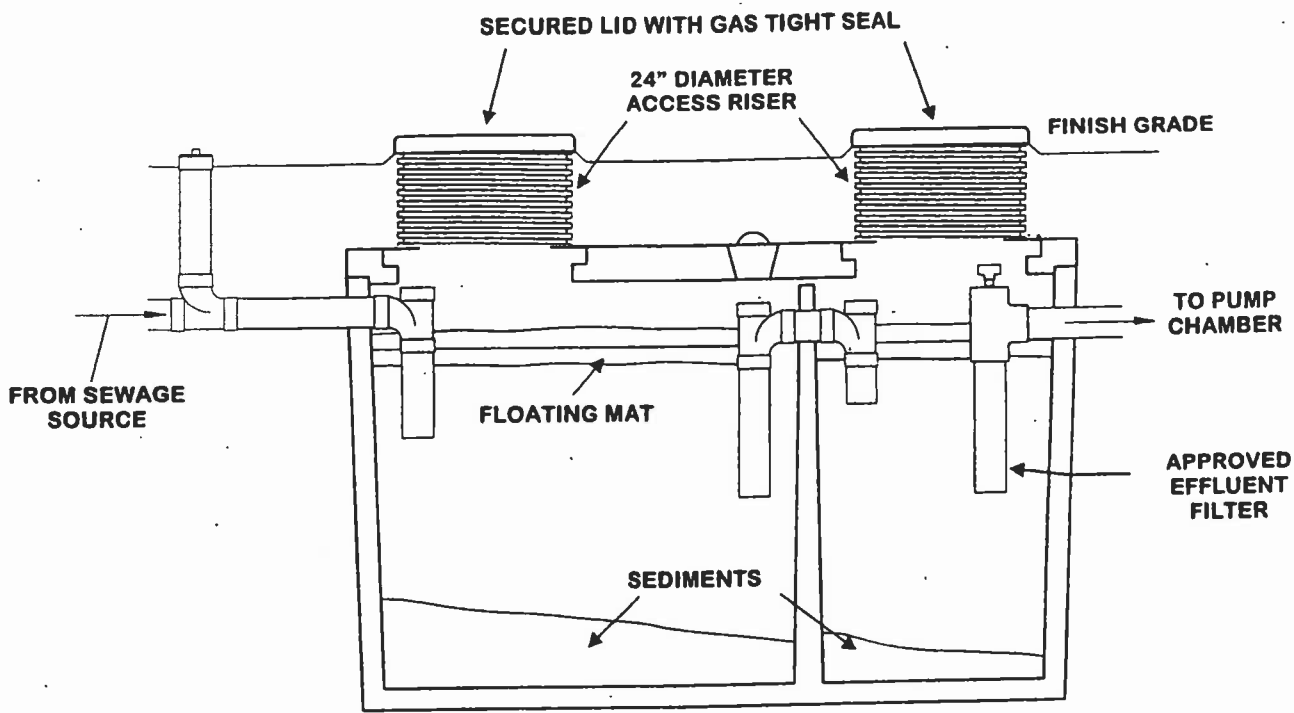


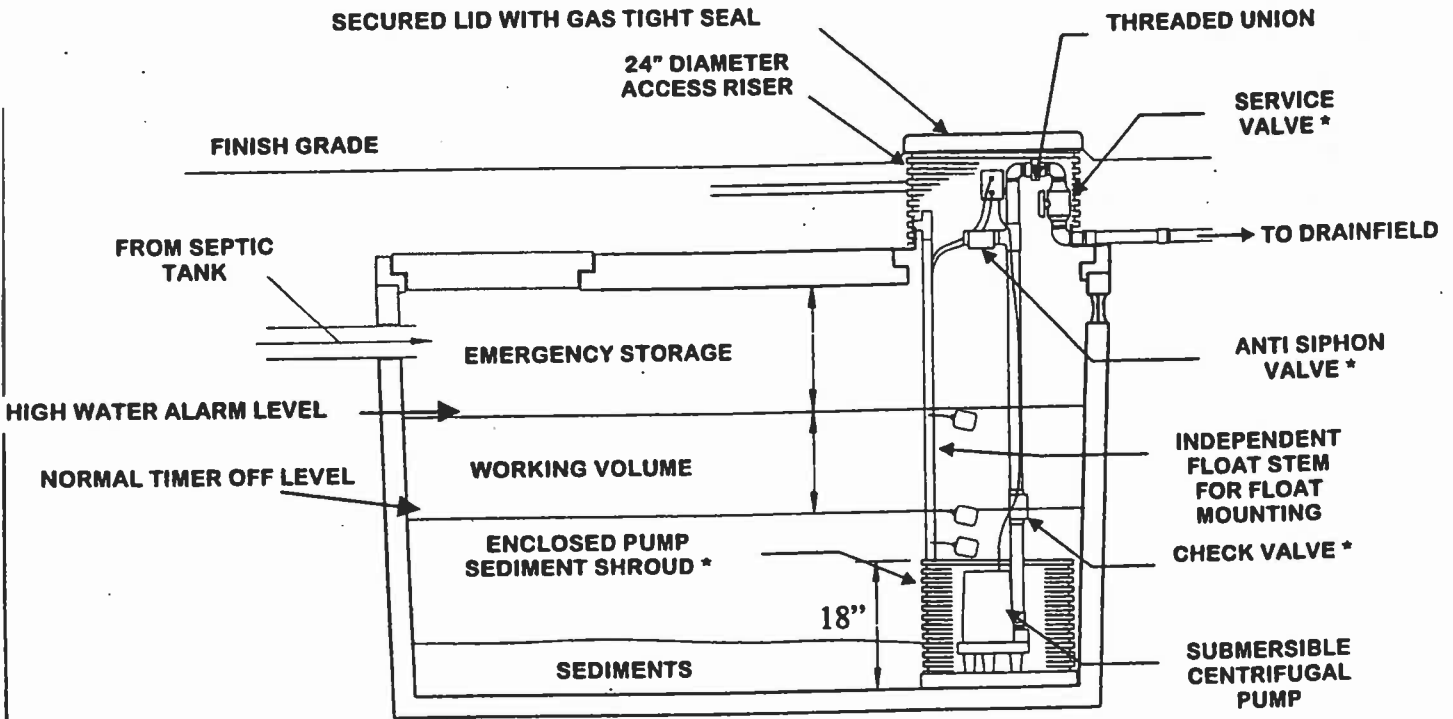
Figure C

This illustrates what happens in your septic tank. Household wastewater first flows into the septic tank where it should stay for at least a day to allow sufficient time for settling and treatment (Figure C). Heavy solids in the wastewater will settle to the bottom of the tank, forming a layer referred to as "sludge". Grease, oils, and light solids float to the top forming a layer of "scum". The sludge and scum remain in the tank where naturally occurring bacteria work to break them down. The bacteria will not completely break down all of the sludge and scum, however, and this is why septic tanks need to be periodically pumped.

In the septic tank, solids settle to the bottom, and bacteria break down some of the material into gases. After settling, the clarified liquid flows from the septic tank into the drainfield and then seeps into the soil. Filtration by the soil and microorganism activity in the soil remove most of the impurities in the liquid wastes. In a properly designed, operated, and maintained system, disease-causing organisms will be reduced to safe levels before the treated wastewater reaches groundwater.



**SEPTIC TANK
(TYPICAL)**



**PUMP CHAMBER
(TYPICAL)**

* AS NEEDED

FIGURE 2

How to Care for Your On-Site Sewage System

Septic system maintenance is often compared to automobile maintenance because only a little effort on a regular basis can save a lot of money and significantly prolong the life of the system.

Sound septic system operation and maintenance practices include conserving the water, being careful that nothing harmful is disposed of through the system, and having the system inspected periodically and pumped as needed.

Use Water Wisely



Water conservation is very important for septic systems because continual saturation of the soil in the drainfield can affect the quality of the soil and its ability to naturally remove toxins, bacteria, viruses, and other pollutants from the wastewater. Additionally, because the wastewater may not have sufficient time to adequately settle out in the septic tank, high volume flow rates can contribute to carryover of solids from the septic tank into the drainfield, clogging soil pores and degrading the performance of the system.

First look for ways water that you may be *wasting* water. Immediately repair any leaking faucets or running toilets. Use washing machines and dishwashers only when full.

Now, look for ways to use *less* water. For example, avoid letting the water run while washing hands and brushing teeth. Avoid long showers. Install water-saving features in faucets and shower heads. These devices can reduce water use by up to 50%! Consider installing low-flush toilets—they use only one to two gallons per flush compared to 3 to 5 for conventional toilets. Even using a toilet dam or putting a container filled with rocks in the toilet tank can reduce water use by up to 25%.

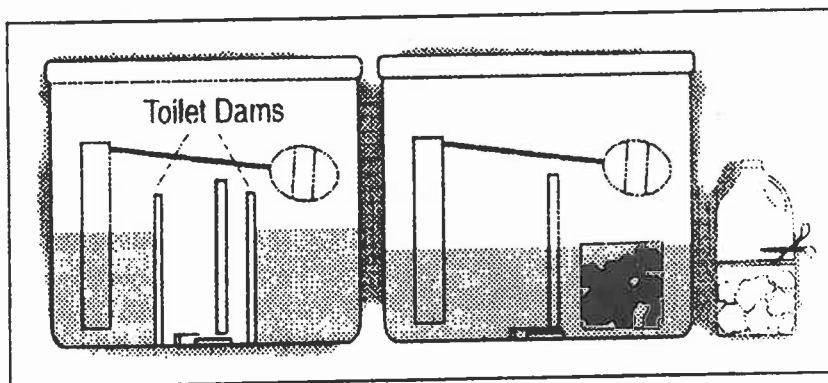
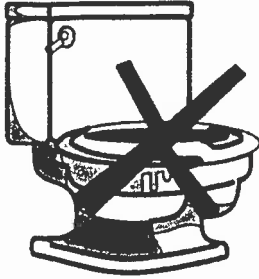


Figure 16
Toilet Dams

Also, it is important to avoid overloading your system, even occasionally, by using a lot of water in a short period of time, or by allowing too much outside water to reach the drainfield. Try to space out activities requiring heavy water use (like laundry) over several days. Also, divert roof drains, surface water, and sump pumps away from the drainfield.

Know What Not to Flush

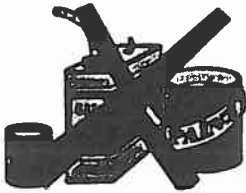


What you put into your septic system greatly affects its ability to do its job. As a general rule of thumb, do not dispose of anything in your septic system that can just as easily be put into the trash. Remember that your system is not designed to be a garbage disposal, and that solids which build up in the septic tank eventually need to be pumped out.

In the kitchen, avoid washing food scraps, coffee grinds, and other food items down the drain. Grease and cooking oils contribute to the layer of scum in the tank and also should not be put down the drain. Garbage disposals can increase the amount of solids in the tank up to 50% and are not recommended for use with septic systems.

The same common sense approach used in the kitchen should be used in the bathroom. The only items that should be flushed down the toilet are toilet waste, wastewater, and toilet paper. See "Do Not Flush" in *Do's and Don'ts*.

Avoid Hazardous Chemicals



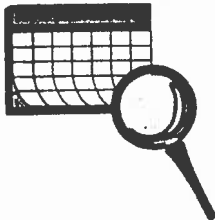
To avoid disrupting or permanently damaging your septic system, do not use it to dispose of hazardous household chemicals. Even small amounts of paints, varnishes, thinners, waste oil, photographic solutions, pesticides, and other organic chemicals can destroy helpful bacteria and the biological digestion taking place within your system. These chemicals also pollute the groundwater.

Some septic system additives that claim to help or clean your system also contain hazardous chemicals. Avoid them.

Use household cleaners, such as bleach, disinfectants, drain cleaners, and toilet bowl cleaners sparingly and only in accordance with product labels. Heavy use of these products can harm your system. Keep all toxic and hazardous chemicals out of your septic tank system.

To prevent groundwater pollution, be sure to dispose of leftover hazardous chemicals by taking them to an approved hazardous waste collection center, such as the Moderate Risk Waste Facility in South Kitsap (telephone 895-5777 or 1-800-825-4940).

Inspect Your System Annually



Annual inspections can reveal problems before they become serious and are a good way to monitor your system's health. If you have any system other than a conventional septic tank and drainfield, more frequent inspections (annual, semi-annual, or quarterly) are required by the Bremerton-Kitsap County Health District. Conventional systems must be inspected at least once every three years. By checking the levels of sludge and scum in your tank you can get a more accurate idea of how often it should be pumped. See *Maintaining Your On-Site Sewage System* for more information on septic system inspections and recommended pumping frequencies and procedures.

Regularly inspecting your septic tank is probably the single most important thing you can do to protect your system. Keeping the solids in the tank within acceptable limits prevents their carryover to the drainfield. As we

have seen, solids carryover can degrade the performance of the system and can potentially cause enough damage to require the drainfield to be replaced. (See *Maintaining Your On-Site Sewage System* for instructions on how to inspect your septic tank.)

Protect Your System

Finally, it is important to protect your septic system from potential damage by doing the following:

- Keep system components accessible for maintenance.
- Don't plant anything but grass or shallow-rooted plants near your system, including the replacement drainfield area (reserve area)
- Do not drive on or park heavy vehicles in this area.
- Do not construct any permanent buildings over the area.
- Do not disturb the soil in this area.
- Do not remove large trees or other large root systems from the area without first consulting your system designer or a Health District Inspector.



See the next section, *Do's and Don'ts*, for more information on taking care of your system.

Do's and Don'ts

Sepptic systems can fail. Improper siting, construction, or design can contribute to septic system failures. But if your system has been properly designed, constructed, and installed, then *you* are the most likely remaining threat to the health and longevity of your septic system. Fortunately, it is easy to properly operate and maintain your system. If you observe these *Do's and Don'ts*, you will avoid the most common problems associated with improper use.



Do's

- **Do** learn the location of your septic tank, drainfield, and drainfield replacement area. (If installed after 1970, the Health District should have records of your installation.) Keep a sketch in this manual or in another, readily retrievable location. Before you plant a garden, construct a building, or install a pool or lawn sprinkler system, check on the location of your system and replacement area.
- **Do** have your septic system inspected annually (at least once every 3 years for a conventional system), and pump, only as needed, using a certified pumping contractor. (The Health District maintains list of certified pumpers.)
- **Do** keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumpings. Install risers if necessary.
- **Do** call a professional whenever you experience problems with your system, or if there are signs of system failure.
- **Do** keep a detailed record of repairs, pumpings, inspections, permits issued, and other maintenance activities. Use only Kitsap County certified installers.

NOTE: All repairs require a permit and an inspection by a District Health Inspector.



Don'ts

- **Don't** go down into a septic tank. Toxic gases are produced by the natural treatment processes in septic tanks and can kill in minutes. Extreme care should be taken when inspecting a septic tank, even when just looking in it.
- **Don't** allow anyone to drive or park over any part of the system, including the replacement area. Keep livestock off the drainfield and replacement area. The pressure can compact the soil or damage pipes.
- **Don't** plant anything over or near the drainfield except grass and shallow-rooted plants. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs can clog and damage the drain lines. If you are not sure whether a plant is safe, ask the nursery personnel. Don't place plastic or extra soil on top of the drainfield area—this decreases evaporation from the soil and hinders proper system action.
- **Don't** dig in your drainfield or build anything over it.
- **Don't** cover the drainfield with a hard surface such as concrete or asphalt. The area over the drainfield should have a grass cover.
- **Don't** use your toilet as a trash can for the following items (See *Do Not Flush*).

DO NOT FLUSH

coffee grains	dental floss	disposable diapers
kitty litter	sanitary napkins	tampons
cigarette butts	condoms	fat, grease, or oil
paper towels	newspapers	wrapping papers
	rag	

These items can overtax or destroy the biological digestion taking place within your system.



Do's

- **Do** conserve water to avoid overloading the system. The more water you use, the more the soil must treat and absorb, potentially overloading the system and degrading performance. Be sure to repair any leaky faucets or toilets.
- **Do** avoid high water use peaks by balancing your water use throughout the week. For example, when washing clothes, avoid washing several loads at one time. Instead, do only one or two loads a day, spread out over several days during the week. This avoids overloading the drainfield at any one time.
- **Do** divert other sources of water, like roof drains, surface water from driveways, house footing drains, and sump pumps away from the drainfield and replacement area. Excessive water keeps the soil in the drainfield from naturally cleansing the wastewater. The soil over your system should be slightly mounded to help surface water runoff.
- **Do** cover the drainfield with grass. The grass prevents erosion and helps remove excess water.
- **Do** periodically inspect the drainfield (and mound and sand filter as applicable) and down-slope areas for odors, wet spots, or surfacing sewage. If your system has inspection pipes, check them to see if there is a liquid level continually over 6 inches. This may be an early indication of a problem. Call your O&M contractor or the Bremerton-Kitsap County Health District for assistance.
- **Do** use bleach, disinfectants, and drain and toilet cleaners sparingly. These chemicals also can kill the beneficial bacteria that treat your wastewater.



Don'ts

- **Don't** make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required Health District permit. Use professional licensed septic contractors when needed.
- **Don't** use septic tank additives. These products usually do not help, and some are harmful to your system.
- **Don't** put hazardous household chemicals, such as paints, varnishes, thinners, waste oils, photographic solutions, pesticides down the drain. Harsh chemicals kill the beneficial bacteria that treat your wastewater and poison the groundwater. Call the Washington State Department of Ecology Recycling Hot Line (1-800-RECYCLE) and refer to WSU publication EB 1522, *Disposal of Hazardous Waste*, for information on the proper recycling and disposal of these materials.
- **Don't** use a garbage disposal without checking with the Health District to make sure that your septic system can accommodate this additional waste, then use it sparingly. If you do use a garbage disposal regularly, you should inspect your septic tank more frequently, and you may need more frequent pumpings.
- **Don't** allow backwash from home water softeners to enter the septic system. The wastewater contains chemicals that can disrupt the biological balance of your septic system.

Maintaining Your On-Site Sewage System

Periodic inspections of your septic system are required to ensure that it is working properly and to determine when the septic tank should be pumped. On-site sewage system failures can happen without any warning signs. By inspecting and pumping your system when required, you can prevent the high cost of septic system failure. For standard gravity systems, the State Department of Health and the County Health District regulations require the septic tank to be inspected at least once every three years. Because alternative systems are more complex, they require a higher level of scheduled maintenance and monitoring. Alternative system owners must have a maintenance contract with certified a O&M specialist.

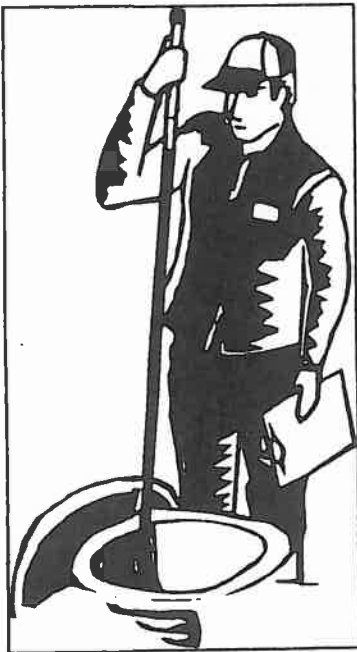
Can I Perform My Own System Inspections?

If you own a standard gravity (conventional) septic system, you can perform your own septic tank inspections provided you comply with approved procedures for measuring scum and sludge levels (below) and submit a report of your inspection to the County Health District. However, you may consider hiring a certified maintenance professional. A professional can perform a thorough inspection of the entire system, checking for cracked pipes, evaluating the condition of the tees or baffles, and inspecting other parts of the system.

Inspecting Your System

A thorough septic system inspection will include the following—

1. **Locating the system** (when an as-built drawing is not available)—One way to locate the tank is to go into the basement or crawl space and observe the direction the sewer pipe exits the house. Then go outside, and at that location, start probing the soil with a thin metal rod 10 to 15 feet from the foundation.
2. **Uncovering the manhole and inspection ports** (if ground-level access covers are not installed)—This will probably require you to do some digging in your yard.
3. **Flushing the toilets**—This is done to determine if the plumbing going to the system is working correctly.
4. **Measuring the scum and sludge layers in the septic tank**—See instructions below.
5. **Checking the tank and the drainfield**—The contractor will check the condition of the baffles or tees and effluent screens, the walls of the tank for cracks, and the drainfield for any signs of failure. If your system includes a distribution box, drop box, or pump, the contractor will check these too.
6. **External visual inspection**—Ensure there are no deep-rooted plants or buildings over drainfield.



If you have a pressure distribution system, your periodic inspection should also the following:



1. **Checking the pump chamber, pump, and floats**—and replacing or repairing worn or broken parts. Pump maintenance should follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Timer settings will be checked. Check electrical parts and conduits for corrosion. If the alarm panel has a "push-to-test" button, it should be checked regularly.
2. **Checking the screens**—Installing a septic tank effluent filter or pump screen, if your systems does not have one. Screening or filtering the septic tank effluent provides an effective way of preventing solids from clogging the pump and drainfield pipes. Inspecting a screen or filter, and cleaning when necessary, is quick and easy, and prevents costly damage from solids entering the system.
3. **Visual inspection into ports**—For mounds and sand filters, for standing water.
4. **Squirt test and/or pump drawdown**—To check pump performance. A squirt test measures the height of the liquid column at one or more locations in the system downstream of the pump. A drawdown test measures the time the pump takes to discharge a known volume of wastewater from the pump tank. These tests monitor the condition of the pump. They can also be indications of orifice clogging.
5. **Checking for liquid seeps (leakage) around fill**—If you have a mound system.
6. **Sample collection BOD, TSS, fecal coliform**—These laboratory analyses that measure the contamination level (waste strength) of the wastewater. If your system includes an aerobic treatment unit or other proprietary treatment device, your yearly inspection will include sampling the water coming out of the unit.

Keep It Accessible

You'll save time and money if you keep your system easy to locate and accessible for future inspections and service visits—

- Keep a copy of your as-built drawing (or your own map of your system), showing location of the components.
- Ensure there are no deep-rooted plants or structures over the drainfield.
- If your system is not already completely maintenance-accessible, ask your installer or O&M contractor about installing the necessary components to make it so.

For example, if manholes and inspection ports are buried, consider installing risers (elevated access covers) at this time to make the components easily accessible for future inspections. Retrofitting will likely save you quite a bit of money in the long run. Pumpers and maintenance contractors will charge extra if they must do work to expose tanks and other components requiring access. Digging up these components each time will also disturb your landscaping.

Inspecting Your Septic Tank

DANGER

Use extreme caution when inspecting a septic tank. Never inspect a septic tank alone. Never enter a septic tank. Toxic gases are produced by the natural treatment processes in septic tanks and can kill in minutes. Even just looking in the tank can be dangerous.

To inspect your own septic tank, you will need the following:

1. A long stick (approximately 6 ft) with a hinge device at the end—for measuring the scum layer
2. A pen or pencil
3. Measuring tape
4. A scrap of lumber (such as 2 X 4), long enough to rest across the septic tank manhole opening.
5. A long stick (approximately 6 ft) with a white terry cloth towel wrapped and secured (with tape or string) to the other end for about 3 ft—for measuring the sludge layer.

Note: Equipment is also commercially available to measure scum and sludge levels.

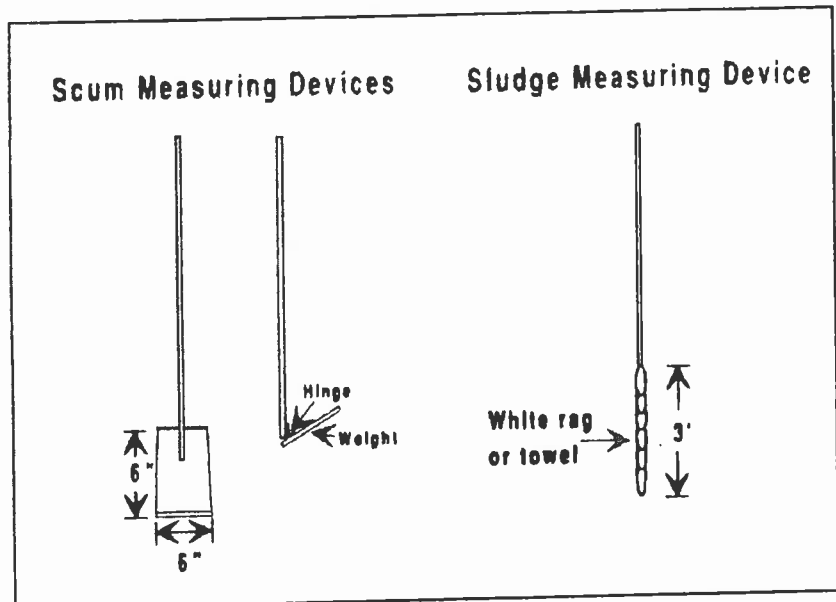


Figure 17
Scum and Sludge
Measuring Devices

Measuring the Scum Layer

DANGER

NEVER enter any septic tank. Poisonous gases or the lack of oxygen can be fatal.

Measure the scum layer as follows:

1. Remove the manhole cover located at the outflow side of the first compartment of the septic tank.
2. Measure the distance between the top of the scum layer and the top of the outlet TEE. If this distance is one (1) inch or less, the tank needs to be pumped.

If the distance between the top of the scum layer and the top of the outlet TEE is acceptable (greater than 1 inch), proceed to check the distance between the bottom of the scum layer and the bottom of the outlet TEE as follows.

3. Lay the scrap lumber across the manhole opening. It will provide a reference position for measuring.

4. Insert the hinged stick through the manhole opening located at the outflow side of the first compartment. After the hinge drops, slowly pull up on the stick until you can feel the resistance of the scum layer. At the point of resistance, mark the stick at the top surface of the lumber.
5. Next, lower the stick and manipulate the position of the hinge plate until you locate the bottom of the outlet TEE. Mark this position on the stick, again using the scrap lumber as a reference point.
6. Remove the stick and measure the distance between the two marks. This is the distance between the bottom of the scum layer and the bottom of the outlet TEE. If this distance is three (3) inches or less, your septic tank needs to be pumped.

Measuring the Sludge Layer

Measure the sludge layer as follows:

1. Insert the cloth-wrapped stick (swab end down) all the way to the bottom of the tank. (By inserting the stick through the TEE, you can avoid passing the swab end through the scum layer). Mark the stick using the scrap lumber as a reference (this mark indicates the bottom of the tank). Let the swab rest for a few minutes on the bottom to allow the sludge to adhere to the terry cloth. Then remove the stick. The dark stain on the cloth indicates the sludge layer.
2. Lay the scum stick alongside the sludge stick, aligning the mark on the sludge stick with the top mark of the scum stick. Measure from the bottom of the scum stick (hinge plate down) to the top of the sludge stain. This is the distance between the top of the sludge and the bottom of the outflow TEE. If this distance is 12 inches or less, the tank needs to be pumped.

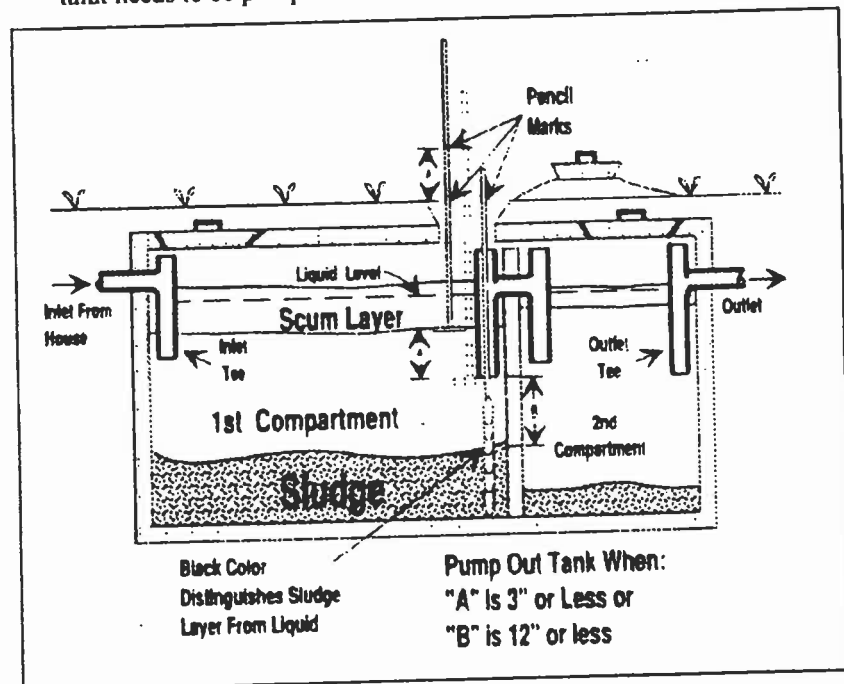


Figure 18
 Inspecting the Septic Tank

When to Pump Your Septic Tank

How often your tank needs to be pumped depends on the tank size, the number of people living in your home, and the habits of your particular household. Most tanks need to be pumped every 3 to 5 years. Use of garbage disposals will tend to require more frequent pumping. The only sure way to determine when a tank needs to be pumped is to inspect the sludge and scum layers.

I Need to Pump my Septic Tank—What Now?

When it is time to pump out your tank, be sure to hire a certified pumper. They will have the appropriate equipment and will dispose of the sludge at an approved treatment site. You can obtain a list of certified pumping contractors from the County Health District.

It is a good idea to be present when your tank is being pumped. Make sure the contractor uses the manhole, not the inspection ports, to pump the tank. This avoids damage to the baffles or tees. Also make sure that all the material in the tank is removed. It is not necessary to leave anything in the tank to "restart" the biological processes. Nor is it necessary to scrub out or disinfect the tank.

NOTE: Pumping contractors are required to complete a Pump Report Form for each septic tank inspection and pumping. This form documents the condition of the tank contents and indicates whether the tank was pumped (See Appendix C). The completed form is turned in to the Health District and becomes part of the records of the property, updating the information about the performance of the site's septic system.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to put additives in my septic system to keep it working properly?

No! Household wastewater contains an abundant supply of microorganisms that provide for the proper functioning of your system. Because most engineers and sanitation professionals believe that commercial septic system additives are useless (and potentially harmful) to a system, the County Health District advises against the use of any commercial additives.

More About Additives

There are two types of septic system additives—chemical and biological (such as bacteria, enzymes, and yeast). Chemical additives can harm the soil in the drainfield and contaminate the groundwater. As yet, there have been no extensive, conclusive studies on the effect of biological additives. Some experts say they are unnecessary, but harmless. Other septic system experts maintain that even the biological additives can be harmful by disrupting the naturally occurring biological activity in the septic tank.

How do household cleaners and detergents affect my system?



When used as recommended by the manufacturer, most household cleaning products will not adversely affect the operation of your septic tank. Drain cleaners are an exception, however, and only a small amount of these products can kill the bacteria and temporarily disrupt the operation of the tank.

I have a pump or other electrical components in my system. What should I do if I have a power outage or pump failure?



Take action to protect the drainfield from overloading after a prolonged power outage or pump failure. Effluent will continue to collect in the pump chamber until the pump resumes operation. If all of the reserve storage inside the chamber is used, the plumbing in your home can back up. Also, with additional effluent in the chamber, the pump may deliver a volume greater than the drainfield can handle once power is restored. When the pump is off for more than 6 hours, the following measures can be taken to help protect the drainfield.

1. Reduce your water use to a minimum.
2. Turn off the pump at the control panel.
3. After power is restored or pump service is completed, switch the pump on and let it run for a maximum of 5 minutes, then turn it off again. Repeat this manual switching every 6 hours until the effluent drops to the "OFF" float level and the pump turns off automatically. (If there

was minimal water use during the time the system was inoperable, the pump may automatically turn off during the first manual switching.)

What do I do if I smell sewage?

If your system is more than one year old, call your maintenance specialist County Health District for assistance.

If you have a new system, or if your septic tank has been recently pumped, it is not unusual to detect sewage odors. This is because the scum layer, which helps protect against release of odorous gases, has not yet formed. If the system is not new or recently pumped, further investigation is required.

What do I do if I get an alarm?

Silence the alarm, immediately take steps to conserve water, and investigate.



Do not enter the pump chamber.
Gases inside the pump chambers are poisonous, and the lack of oxygen can be fatal. If the problem cannot be located with the above steps, call your certified O&M contractor for service or repair. The service of pumps and other electrical equipment must be done by an experienced O&M professional.

If for any reason the effluent level inside the pump chamber reaches the alarm float (faulty pump, floats, circuit, or another problem), the alarm light and buzzer will energize. By using water conservatively (avoid baths, showers, and clothes washing), the reserve storage in the pump chamber should allow enough time to get the problem corrected. To silence the alarm, push the reset light on the alarm panel. Before calling for service or repair, check to see if the problem could be:

1. A tripped circuit breaker or blown fuse. The pump should have a separate circuit with its own breaker or fuse. If it is on a circuit with other equipment, that equipment can cause the breaker to trip.
2. A pump or float switch power cord that has come unplugged. If electrical connections are the plug-in type, be sure the switch and pump plugs are making good contact in the outlet.
3. Control floats tangled by other parts in the chamber such as the electric power cord, lifting rope, or pump screen. Be sure the floats operate freely in the chamber.
4. Debris on floats and support cable that is causing the pump to switch off. Lift the floats out of the chamber and clean them.

CAUTION—Always turn off the power supply at the circuit breaker, and unplug all power cords before handling the pump or floats.

I have a brand new system, and I want an attractive yard. What are my options for landscaping?



Lots. It is important to keep covers and inspection ports easily accessible for your maintenance contractor. If you bury them, they will need to be uncovered again each time your system is inspected. This is disruptive *and* expensive. Here are some things you can do that beautify your yard and still allow for easy accessibility to components for system maintenance.

- After the system is covered, cut the inspection port pipes flush with the final level of the lawn.
- Paint inspection port covers (pit boxes, irrigation boxes) green.
- If you must bury inspection covers, cover them with just a few inches of top soil, and mark the locations.
- Position lightweight potted plants, bird baths, fountains or other such items over the tops of septic tank/pump tank covers.
- Beware of trees with deep and extensive root systems (consult with your local nursery).

I want to install a sprinkler system. What must I do to make sure my septic system is not damaged?

Remember that there is only 12 inches of cover (soil) on top of your drainfield. If you dig deeper than this 12 inches or accidentally cut into a drainfield line, call your installer immediately.

How can I tell if my system is failing?

The following are warning signs of a failing system:



- Slowly draining sinks and toilets
- Gurgling sounds in the plumbing
- Plumbing backups
- Pooled water or damp places in your yard with foul odor and/or dark gray or black color to the soils. Watch particularly at the bottom of slopes that drain away from the drainfield and in drainage ditches.
- Areas where water comes to the surface, particularly after heavy rains or during increased water usage such as while doing laundry.
- Sewage odors in the house or yard
- Ground wet or mushy underfoot
- Grass growing faster and greener in one particular area of the yard

None of these warning signs is a sure indication of system failure, but if you observe one or more of them, inform your O&M contractor and request an inspection.

What do I do if my septic system is failing?

The following outlines the steps you must take to repair your failing septic system.



- 1. Contact and hire a certified County designer or a licensed civil/sanitary engineer.**

A list of certified designers is available at the Health District offices. See Appendix D for the location of the office nearest you.

The Health District suggests that you contact at least two or three different designers before you hire one so that you can compare and discuss repair options and cost estimates.

- 2. Submit a repair plan for construction to the Health District for review and approval.**

Your certified designer/engineer will submit the construction plan to the Health District for you. Once the Health District receives the plan, an on-site sewage inspector will:

- a. Make a site visit to determine whether the designed repair will meet state and local on-site sewage regulations.**
- b. If necessary, discuss and modify the planned repair with the designer/engineer.**
- c. Approve the repair construction plan when it meets all applicable rules and regulations.**

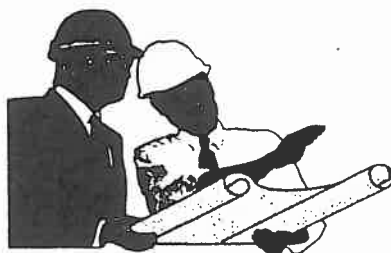
- 3. Select and hire a Health District certified septic system installer.**

Certified installers are on the same list as the certified designers. (Some certified designers are certified installers as well.)

If you need to hire a certified installer, the Health District suggests that you request at least two or three bids from different installers before hiring one.

- 4. Install the approved repair.**

Installation by a certified installer may begin after the repair plan is approved by the Health District and your installer has obtained an installation permit from the Health District.



What do I do if my septic system is failing? (cont.)

5. **Have the completed construction work inspected and approved by the Health District.**

A Health District on-site inspector will inspect the new construction before it is covered up. If everything is satisfactory, the repair will be approved by the inspector and the installer will then cover the system with soil. Your repaired system is now ready for use!

Keys to a Successful Repair—A List of Things NOT to Do

Avoiding the following mistakes will make the repair process proceed more smoothly:

1. **Do not attempt to correct your failing system without a permit! All repairs must be permitted by the Health District!**
 2. **If you have a failing system, pumping your septic tank alone will not correct the problem. Neither will adding more soil over the top of the drainfield correct the problem. Don't waste money! For a permanent solution, you must identify and correct the cause.**
 3. **Don't waste money on gimmicks! There are several unauthorized companies that may call you at home or advertise in the newspaper, attempting to sell you magic potions or other quick fixes. Call the Health District before you agree to pay for any service or product.**
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