

## Care of Your Septic System

- **Do** keep a record of when the system was last pumped and when the distribution box was switched. Follow table above for frequency on pumping.
- **Do** practice water conservation. Repair any leaky faucets immediately.
- Do learn the location of the system. Keep a drawing on hand as to the location and what components it consists of.
- **Do** divert all surface water away from the system along with roof drains, footers, and sump pumps.
- **Do** use plain white toilet paper as it does not contain dyes that will need to be broken down.
- **Do** plant the area with grass and keep it mowed.
- **Don't** pump nondegradable materials (grease, plastics, feminine hygiene products, etc.) down the toilets or drains. These can plug the pipes and will fill up your tank with solids quicker.
- **Don't** allow toxic and hazardous chemicals to go into the system. These can destroy the healthy digestive bacteria that are needed in your septic system.
- **Don't** drive or park on the septic system.
- **Don't** build barns or swimming pools over the area. These things compact the soil and prevent the system from working properly.

## Questions to Ask About a Septic System When Purchasing a Home

- Age of the system
- Size of the system
- Any problems in the past
- Last time the tank was pumped
- Is the tank accessible? (If not, it should be made accessible.)
- Check if they have a drawing of the system —location and size. If they do not, then check with the health department.

### Warning Signs a System is Failing

- Effluent surfacing on the ground
- Sewage backing up into the house
- Slow draining toilets and drains
- Sewage odors



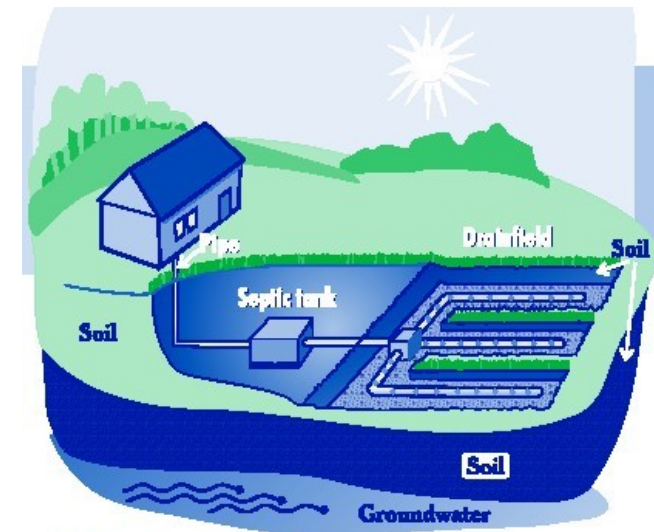
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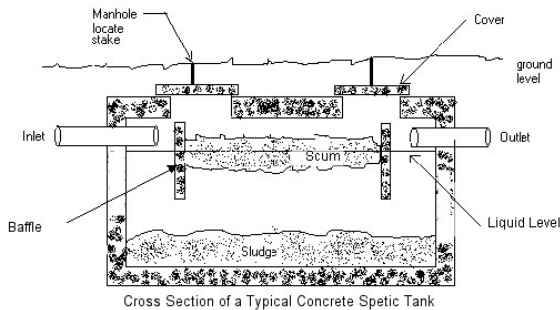
# CARE OF YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM



Typical onsite wastewater treatment system

# Components of A Septic System

- SEPTIC TANK—The purpose of the septic tank is to separate the solids from the liquids. There are anaerobic bacteria that are in the septic and they partially breakdown the solids and liquids. The tank contains three distinct areas—the bottom sludge area, the middle layer, and the top scum layer (see photo).



The bacteria DO NOT totally breakdown the solids, therefore regular pumping is required to remove those solids. Refer to the table below for frequency in the number of years. This does not take into consideration if a home has a garbage disposal. The use of a garbage disposal with increase the amount of solids in the tank by as much as 50%.

Tank Size (gals)	# People in Household					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
500	5.8	2.6	1.5	1	0.7	0.4
750	9.1	4.2	2.6	1.8	1.3	1.0
1000	12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2.0	1.5
1500	18.9	9.1	5.9	4.2	3.3	2.6
2000	25.4	12.4	8.0	5.9	4.5	3.7
2500	31.9	15.6	10.2	7.5	5.9	4.8

Frequency (Years) for Tank Pumping

- DISTRIBUTION BOX—The distribution box follows the septic tank. It consists of a box that has a pipe coming from the septic tank and at least two pipes exiting the box. One of the exit pipes will have a diversionary device (often a PVC elbow or a paddle) on it so that only one exit pipe is being used at a time. The leach field, as explained below, is divided into two equal fields. The diversionary device is utilized to that only one of the fields is used at a time. This allows one field to recuperate while the other is being used. The diversionary device should be changed once a year. It is usually a good idea to pick a date you will remember (birthday, anniversary, daylight savings time).
- LEACHING TILE FIELD—After the effluent is directed from the distribution box, it enters a series of pipes in the leaching tile field. Most leaching tile fields consist of a trench that is lined with gravel, a pipe with holes along the bottom, more gravel, straw or hay, and then backfilled with soil. A leaching tile field is sized based upon the number of bedroom in a house and the soil structure and soil texture. (Contact this office for more information.) The effluent moves through the pipes and gravel where it is stored until it disperses (leaches) into the native soil below the piping. In the native soil, the effluent is treated to remove any further contaminants by filtering through the different soil layers.

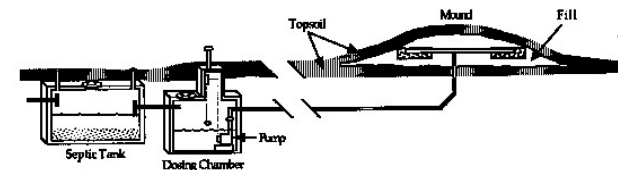
There are also gravel less systems available. These systems utilize a chamber instead of a pipe, but are sized and installed the same. They are an acceptable alternative to the gravel and pipe leaching tile fields.

- CURTAIN DRAIN—The curtain drain surrounds the leaching tile field. The purpose of the curtain drain is to prevent ground water from saturating the leaching tile field. It is located at least 8 feet from the last leaching tile line and is at least 6 inches deeper than the leaching tile lines. The curtain drain has to have an inspection port or an open outlet.

- OTHER TYPES OF SYTEMS—Some older homes will have a septic tank followed by a subsurface sand filter bed. A subsurface sand filter bed consists of an excavated area filled with sand and gravel layers and piping. This system has an outlet which should have an inspection port so that the effluent being discharged can be monitored to determine if the effluent is being effectively treated.

Another type of system that some homes have is an aeration system. This type of system consists of a tank that has a motor that introduces air into the septic. This creates aerobic bacteria that break down the solids and create a clean effluent to be discharged. This system requires an inspection port so that it can be monitored for effectiveness. This system is typically used as a replacement system for existing homes that do not have room or proper soils for any other type of system. The homeowner is required to have a maintenance contract and an addendum placed on their deed stating that the system will be maintained by them and/or any future homeowners. (These systems are not permitted for new building sites.)

- ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS—If a leaching tile field cannot be used on a new building site, then an alternative system can be utilized. A mound system is one type of alternative system. A mound system uses an aeration tank and pump followed by a mounded system. The system utilized sand above the native soil layer. Engineered plans are typically required for this type of system.



Other new types of systems are being introduced all the time, such as peat filters and at-grade pressure distribution systems. Contact the Health Department for further information.