

Septic System Do's and Don'ts

How you treat your septic system greatly affects its ability to do its job. Educating everyone in your household about what is and is not good for your septic system can help you save money and headaches, prolong the life of your system, safeguard the health of your family, protect your property value and care for the environment.

INSTALLATION

DO

- Use professional licensed contractors to design and install your system.
- If you are planning an addition that adds more than 15 per cent to your home's floor area, increases the number of bedrooms or increases the number of plumbing fixtures, you may need to enlarge your septic system.

DON'T

- Do not expand the size of your residence, add a basement suite or start a business (e.g. day care) without adjusting the size of your septic system.
- Do not attempt to install or repair your septic system without the involvement of a qualified onsite wastewater management professional.
- Do not make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining any required permits.

IN YOUR HOME

DO

- Compost kitchen waste instead of using a garbage disposal.
- Scrape dishes into the garbage instead of the sink.
- Use a drain catcher to stop food bits from going down the drain.
- Install water-saving toilets or install toilet dam devices to reduce water use per flush and reduce the number of times you flush your toilet with multiple uses before flushing.
- Install water-saving faucets and shower heads.
- Fix all leaking faucets and toilets immediately.
- Take shorter showers.
- Run washing machines and dishwashers with full loads only and select the proper load size for your machine.
- Wash only one or two loads of laundry a day.

DON'T

- Do not put cigarette butts, paper towels, sanitary tampons, condoms, disposable diapers, plastics or similar non-biodegradable materials into your septic system.
- Avoid washing food scraps, coffee grinds and other food items down the drain.
- Never put oil, gasoline, paint thinners, solvents, pesticides, pharmaceuticals or other toxic chemicals down the drain.

MAINTENANCE

DO

- Know the location of your septic tank and soils treatment component. Keep a sketch of it handy with your system maintenance records.
- Have your system inspected by a professional every year.
- Have your tank pumped out by a professional every 6-24 months.
- Remove sludge in spring rather than fall to avoid loading the tank with undigested solids during cold months.
- Always leave a small amount of sludge to renew the bacterial activity.
- Keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumping. Install risers if necessary and always keep the tank lid secure.
- Call a professional whenever you experience problems with your system, or if there are any signs of system failure.
- Keep detailed records of repairs, pumping, inspections, permits issued and other maintenance activities.

DON'T

- Do not enter or access a septic tank.
- Do not use septic tank additives.
- Do not disinfect, scrub and wash the tank.

IN YOUR YARD

DO

- Watch for any ground settlement that might direct water onto the soils treatment component.
- Keep the area around the septic system grassed to promote evaporation and avoid erosion.

DON'T

- Do not allow vehicles to park on or drive over the soils treatment component area.
- Do not plant any trees or shrubs on or near the soils treatment component; their roots can clog pipes.
- Do not drain downspouts, sump pumps, etc. down the septic system.
- Do not alter drainage features without consideration for impacts to the dispersal field.
- Do not build over the soils treatment component or cover it with a hard surface such as asphalt, brick or patio stones.
- Do not excessively water the lawn over the soils treatment component area.
- Do not install automatic lawn sprinklers in the area.