

MAINTAINING YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

Out of sight and out of mind does this describe your relationship with your septic system?

If you are like most homeowners, you probably never give much thought to what happens to what goes down your drain. But if you rely on a septic system to treat and dispose of your household wastewater, what you don't know can hurt you. Proper operation and maintenance of your septic system can have a significant impact on how well it works and how long it lasts, and septic system maintenance is the responsibility of the homeowner.

Why Maintain Your System?

There are three main reasons why septic system maintenance is so important. The first reason is money. Failing septic systems are expensive to repair or replace, and poor maintenance is a common cause of early system failures. The minimal amount of preventative maintenance that septic systems require costs very little in comparison repairing or replacing a failing septic system.

The second and most important reason to maintain your septic system is to protect the health of your family, your community, and the environment. Failing septic system can pose significant health risks. Failing septic systems can contaminate nearby wells and groundwater.

Finally, the third reason to maintain your septic system is to protect the economic health of your community. Failed septic systems can cause property values to decline. Sometimes real estate sales are delayed for these properties until systems are repaired or replaced.

How Often Should The Septic Tank Be Pumped?

The accumulated solids in the bottom of the septic tank should be pumped out periodically. A general rule of thumb suggests that septic tanks should be pumped out **every three to five years** of normal service. Households that frequently use garbage disposal units should have the septic tank pumped out more frequently than households that do not have garbage disposal units. The following chart provides some guidelines on how often septic tanks should be cleaned based on the tank size and the number of persons in the household.



Tank size (gals.)	Household size (number of people)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
500	5.8	2.6	1.5	1.0	0.7	0.4
750	9.1	4.2	2.6	1.8	1.3	1.0
900	11.0	5.2	3.3	2.3	1.7	1.3
1000	12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2.0	1.5
1250	15.6	7.5	4.8	3.4	2.6	2.0
1500	18.9	9.1	5.9	4.2	3.3	2.6
1750	22.1	10.7	6.9	5.0	3.9	3.1
2000	25.4	12.4	8.0	5.9	4.5	3.7
2250	28.6	14.0	9.1	6.7	5.2	4.2
2500	31.9	15.6	10.2	7.5	5.9	4.8