

Homeowner's Guide to the Care and Maintenance of Private Sewage Disposal Systems

Why Maintain Your System?

If you are like most homeowners, you probably never give much thought to what happens to what goes down your drain. However, if you rely on a private sewage disposal system (PSDS), what you don't know can hurt you. Proper operation and maintenance of your system can have a significant impact on how well it works and how long it lasts.

There are 3 main reasons why PSDS maintenance is so important.

1. **Money.** The minimal amount of preventative maintenance that systems require costs very little in comparison to the cost of a new system.
2. **To protect the health of your family, your community, and the environment.** When PSDS fail, inadequately treated household wastewater is released into the environment. Any contact with untreated human waste can pose significant health risks, and wastewater can contaminate nearby wells, groundwater, and drinking water supplies.
3. **Protect the economic health of your community.** Failed systems can cause property values to decline, and real estate sales to be delayed.

Maintenance tips for homeowners.

- Have your tank pumped every 3-5 years. This flyer has a maintenance log to keep track of your pumping schedule.
- Divert water away from the area of the septic system.
- Only put biodegradable products into the system.
- Do not use septic tank additives, they are not necessary and can possibly harm your system.
- Do not drive over the septic system.
- Conserve water by using low-flow fixtures.

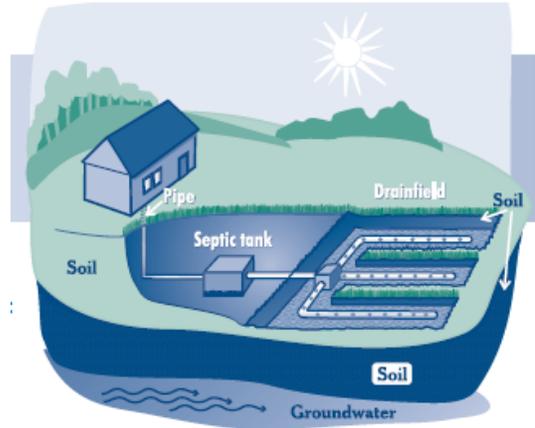
- Repair leaky fixtures.
- Plan high water use tasks at different times of day, rather than all at the same time (e.g. showers, laundry, dishwasher).
- Never dispose of any of these items in your system:
 - Grease
 - Pesticides, insecticides, motor oil
 - Cigarette butts
 - Tampons or sanitary napkins
 - Diapers
 - Condoms

A Quick Course in PSDS Design and Function

In most cases, your private sewage disposal system (PSDS) consists of a septic tank, followed by either seepage fields or a sandfilter. The tank is designed to allow for settling and separation of grease and solids. Baffles in the tank prevent these components from entering the rest of the system and eventually clogging the field lines or filter bed.

Drainfield lines consist of 4" perforated plastic pipes underlain with crushed rock, or certain types of "gravel-less pipe". In both cases, the liquid effluent from the septic tank soaks into the ground and is filtered by the underlying soil.

Sandfilters are used in areas where the soil type does not allow for soil absorption. Sandfilters use a specifically sized sand as a filter medium to "clean" the septic tank effluent. Pipes at the bottom of the system collect the treated effluent and it is discharged to an appropriate area.



Several other types of "alternative" systems are used in special cases. If you have one of these, contact the Health Department for more information about your system.

Maintenance Log

Date System Installed	
Installer	
Phone	
Tank Size (gallons)	
Capacity (# Bedrooms)	
Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Conventional <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative (type) _____

Date	Activities Completed	Contractor/Phone Number	Notes