

SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

WHAT CAN YOU DO?



A failure of a septic system can cause serious problems. Sewage can pond on the ground near the drainfield or back up into buildings. Animals and people may become ill from contact with these discharges. Pollution from failing septic systems can contaminate ditches, creeks, and shallow drinking water supplies. In addition to public health concerns, it's costly to repair or replace the system.

- Know the location of your septic tank, drainfield, and well. For assistance, call the Southwest Washington Health District, at 397-8428.
- Check for signs of septic failure, such as sewage backup in drains or toilets; slow flushing toilets, sinks, or drains; visible liquid on the surface of the ground near the septic system; lush green grass over the drainfield, even during dry weather; build-up of aquatic weeds or algae in lakes or ponds adjacent to your home; unpleasant odors around your house.
- Have your septic tank inspected and pumped by a licensed operator every two to three years.
- Divert other sources of water, like roof drains, house footing drains, and sump pumps to lawn areas away from the septic system. Excessive water floods the system, keeping the soil in the drainfield saturated and unable to adequately treat the wastewater.



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- Limit water entering the septic tank by using water-saving faucets, showers and toilets, spreading clothes washing over the week, minimizing the amount of water used for bathing and dish washing, and fixing leaking faucets and toilets.
- Take leftover hazardous household chemicals to the hazardous waste collection center for disposal. Use bleach disinfectants and toilet bowl cleaner sparingly.
- Don't drive over or park on a drainfield
- Don't plant trees or shrubs on a drainfield.
- Don't cover a drainfield with a hard surface such as concrete, asphalt, above ground pools or decks. The area should have only a grass cover.
- Don't overuse a kitchen garbage disposal. Solids can overload the system. Non-meat kitchen scraps can be composted.
- Don't use commercial septic additives. These products usually do not help significantly and some may harm your system.
- Don't use your toilet as a trash can. Never flush coffee grounds, fat, grease or oil, condoms,, kitty litter, paper towels, sanitary napkins/tampons, dental floss, disposable diapers, cigarette butts or hazardous chemicals down the drain. These items can overtax or destroy the biological digestion taking place within your system.

Call the Southwest Washington Health District at 397-8428 for additional information about maintaining your septic system.

For more information, contact Clark County Public Works, Environmental Services at 397-6118, ext. 4345