

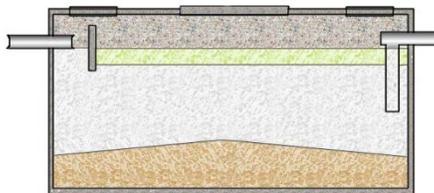
Septic System Best Management Practices For Homeowners

Septic systems protect human health and the environment by safely recycling wastewater and returning it to the natural environment. It is your job as the homeowner to be sure this happens effectively and safely. As with your car or furnace, regular maintenance and attention is needed to keep it operating efficiently in a cost effective manner, and to avoid costly repairs.

Septic Tank

Functions:

- Separates into three layers: scum (stuff that floats), sludge (stuff that sinks), and the liquid.
- The solids and scum are held until removed by a pumper. Anaerobic (oxygen-less) bacteria work to break down wastes, prepare the liquid for the disposal field.
- The liquid is delivered to the disposal field to complete the treatment process.
- If solids are not removed, they can end up in the disposal field, causing often irreparable damage.
- Factors that increase frequency of need for pumping: use of a garbage disposal, a water treatment unit that discharges into the septic system, home occupations or other reasons a large number of people are present most of the time, excessive use of water and strong cleaning products.



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Best management practices:

- Tanks need to be checked every two to five years and pumped if necessary. New homes should be pumped within 12 to 18 months of occupancy to establish a baseline for the pumper.
- Never allow a tank to be cleaned through the inspection pipe. Scum can plug the baffle, or baffles can be knocked off. Tanks should only be cleaned through the access or maintenance hole.
- Be sure baffles, effluent screens, pumps and other components are inspected when the tank is pumped.
- Install risers on the access covers to allow easier access. Insulate the cover with insulation panels and secure tightly.
- An effluent screen will prevent most solids from reaching the disposal field. Install and clean according to manufacturer recommendations.
- Never use additives. The cleaners are harmful to your system, often causing solids to leave the tank and enter the disposal field. They do not replace good management practices. Starters and feeders are not effective.
- Do not ignore alarms-troubleshoot the problem.

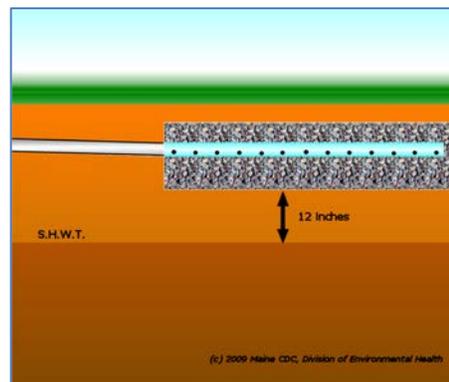
Disposal field

Functions:

- Soil organisms destroy pathogens (bacteria, viruses).
- Remove phosphorus, reduce nitrogen content.
- Recycle clean water into the soil and ground water.
- Water and nutrients enter the ground water, evaporate through plants, and are used by plants.

Best management practices:

- Maintain vegetative cover (turf grass, native grasses, flowers). Mow, but do not fertilize, burn or over-water the disposal field.
- Keep all vehicles, ATVs, snowmobiles, etc. off the disposal field.
- Do not plant trees or woody shrubs on or near the disposal field.
- Inspect for cracked, missing inspection riser covers annually.
- Follow practices to prevent freezing, including not removing snow above the system or distribution lines, and mulching or insulating the entire system if needed.



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