

SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE BEST PRACTICES

Why Maintain your Septic System?

- * It will save you money

By spending a few hundred dollars each year for maintenance, you can make sure your septic system lasts, putting off its expensive replacement for many years

- * Protects your property values

Homes with failing septic systems can be challenging to sell.

- * Protects your and your neighbours' well water

Failing septic systems can contaminate nearby water supplies, including your well. Test your well water to ensure its potability.

- * Protects the environment

If your septic system fails, it could have a detrimental effect on your surrounding environment, including lakes, rivers and streams.



Septic System Maintenance Tips

When you neglect the health of your septic system, you run the risk of a failed system. Septic systems are costly to repair or replace, and a failed system can decrease property values. For this reason, it is important to watch what you flush down the toilet and the sink, conserve water when possible and be aware of activities near your drainfield. By following a few simple steps, your septic system will have a long, productive life:

1. Have your septic system inspected regularly. An inspection should be conducted by a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner every 3 years (at a minimum) for Type I systems and annually for Type II or Type III systems. Be sure to schedule a pump out when the sludge depth exceeds 1/3 of the tank (typically every 3-5 years).
2. Locate your septic tank and drainfield so that you can be prepared if there is a problem. Unsure of the location? Follow this link for information about how you, or a hired professional can locate your septic system: www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan_protect_sustain/groundwater/septic_tank.pdf.
3. Protect your drainfield by leaving it as undisturbed as possible. Do not drive or park on it. Landscape with grass and avoid plants with deep roots that can damage your system. The lawn should be cut regularly to ensure that weeds, brush and trees do not become established in the field.
4. Don't pour grease, fats, medications or harmful chemicals like paints and solvents down the drain. They can clog the system as well as wreak havoc on the microbes that help filter wastewater.
5. Don't Flush non-degradable items such as dental floss, diapers, flushable wipes, feminine hygiene products or coffee grounds down the sink or toilet. These items can potentially clog up your system which could lead to a sewage backup, and will increase the level of sludge in your tank resulting in the need for more frequent pump outs.
6. Reduce water consumption. Excess water use may flush solids into your drainfield before they settle in the tank, causing problems for wastewater filtration. Any plumbing leaks should be repaired immediately. Even a minor leaking toilet can cause an overload of the system.
7. Clothes washing should be spread out over the course of a week. Concentrating laundry loads in a few hours puts an excessive water load on your system. By doing one or two loads per day, you reduce the potential for excessive water and detergent loading.