

Signs of a Failing System

The most obvious septic system failures are easy to spot. Check for pooling water or muddy soil on or around your septic system. Notice whether your toilet or sink backs up or drains slowly when you flush or do laundry. You might also notice strips of bright green grass over the drainfield.

When partially treated wastewater contaminates either surface water or groundwater, it can result in the pollution of wells or nearby lakes, rivers and streams. This type of failure is not easy to detect. Check with a septic system professional or the local health department if you suspect such a failure.

Special Considerations

Garbage Disposals

A garbage disposal *is not* recommended for use with a septic system, but if it is absolutely necessary to install one, a larger capacity septic tank will be required.

Other water discharges

Your septic system is not designed to treat short term large quantities of water. Divert water softener, roof drains, house footing drains, hot tub, swimming pool and sump pump water discharges to lawn areas away from the location of the septic system.

Why are we concerned about Septic Systems?

District Health Department #10 lies within many watersheds. Currently the vast majority of the homes that lie within the boundaries of District Health Department #10 are served by on-site private septic systems. Failing septic systems are suspected to be a significant contributing source of pollution in our watersheds. Unfortunately, septic systems are often neglected and not routinely maintained after the initial installation. A malfunctioning system can contaminate our waterways and groundwater supply.

Remember...

Your septic system is your responsibility! Follow a few simple rules and it can provide you with many years of safe and effective wastewater treatment.

For more information please call the local office of District Health Department #10:

Crawford County Office: 989-348-7800
Kalkaska County Office: 231-258-8669
Lake County Office: 231-745-4663
Manistee County Office: 231-723-3595
Mason County Office: 231-845-7381
Mecosta County Office: 231-592-0130
Missaukee County Office: 231-839-7167
Newaygo County Office: 231-689-7300
Oceana County Office: 231-873-2193
Wexford County Office: 231-775-9942

This brochure is brought to you by:
The Environmental Health Division
of District Health Department #10

A Homeowner's Guide To:

SEPTIC SYSTEM Use & Maintenance



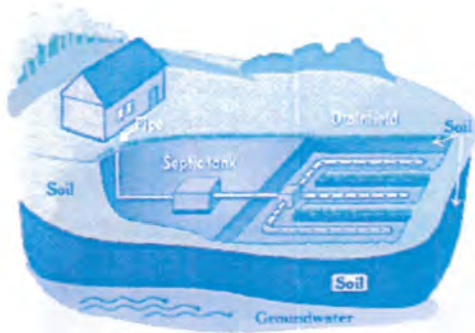
District Health Department #10



dhd10.org

Overview

In the absence of a municipal sewer system, a properly designed, constructed, and maintained septic system can provide a safe and adequate means of treating residential sewage. All waste water from toilets, sinks, laundry and bath tubs & showers need to drain into the septic system.

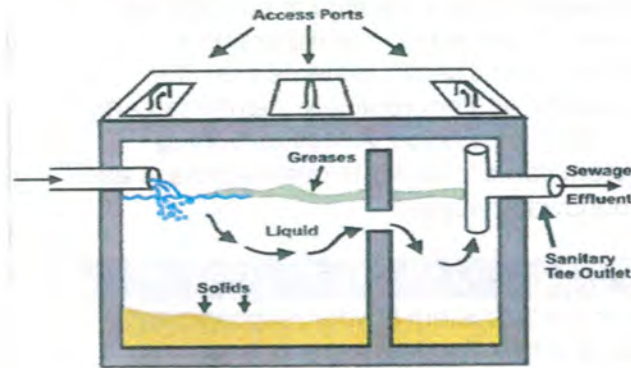


Poorly maintained and failing septic systems can cause serious problems. Sewage from overloaded systems can pond on the ground near the drainfield or back up into buildings. These systems can contaminate ditches, creeks and shallow drinking water supplies. Animals and people may become ill from contact with these polluted waters.

If you have further questions regarding your septic system please contact your local County Health Department branch office.

How Septic Systems Work

Your septic system has two main components. The septic tank provides the first step in treatment; holding all waste for a period of time in which the sewage is conditioned and treated by anaerobic bacteria. The septic tank settles out solids so only liquid reaches the drain field.



The second step is the drainfield. The drainfield receives the septic tank effluent where aerobic treatment begins. It is typically a network of perforated pipes laid in individual gravel-filled trenches, or in rectangular stone beds, in dry permeable soils; sometimes stone-less H.D.P.E. leach chambers are also utilized. As sewage effluent is distributed through the drainfield, the aerobic biological action of microscopic bacteria, mold, fungi, and minerals in the soil all help to "purify" the waste water.

Do's and Don'ts

- Learn the location of your septic tank and drainfield. Keep a sketch of it with your maintenance record for future service visits and inspect the septic tank annually.
- Pump out septic tank sludge every 3 to 4 years.
- Your septic system is not a trash can. Do not put grease, disposable diapers, sanitary products, toxic chemicals, paints, prescription drugs, paper towels or pet litter into your septic system.



- Do not use commercial septic tank additives. Contrary to their claims, additives may not make your septic system work better and some additives may be harmful to septic system operation.
- Keep vehicles and "heavy" equipment off the drainfield area and do not cover the septic system with impervious surfaces (asphalt or cement).
- Keep trees and rooted plants at least 10' away from the drainfield.