



Septic tanks should be pumped out every three to five years to prolong the life of the system.

## Septic Systems: Don't Flush Dollars Down the Drain

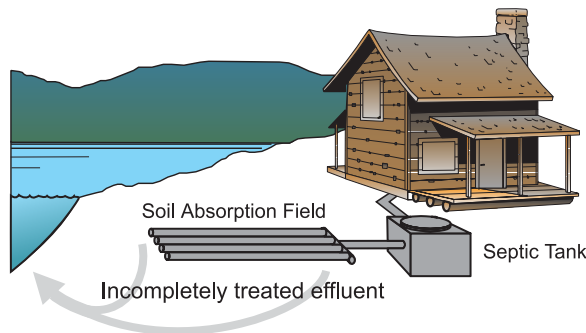
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When septic systems are properly designed, installed, and maintained, they are effective at handling wastewater. However, because these systems are out of sight, they are also often out of mind. Septic systems that are not properly functioning can pose health threats. Here are a few tips that can help you ensure that your septic system is functioning properly:

- Inspect and pump your tank. Avoid costly septic system failures by inspecting the system annually and having it pumped out every three to five years or as recommended. Keep a record of these actions.
- Use caution when disposing of household chemicals. Some chemicals can kill the beneficial bacteria that make the system work. Look for household chemicals labeled "septic friendly". Furthermore, bring your hazardous

chemicals to the county's annual household hazardous waste collection.

- Conserve water. Using less water will extend the life of your system. Run washing machines and dishwashers only when fully loaded, repair leaky fixtures, and install water saving devices.
- Avoid septic tanks additives. Additives are not recommended because they can pollute the groundwater and



Inadequate distances (less than 100 feet) from streams of the lake will not allow the soil to completely treat septic effluent.

harm the beneficial bacteria that make your septic system function properly.

- Don't use your toilet as a trash can. Flushing cigarette butts, diapers, and other bulky items down the toilet can clog the system decreasing its efficiency, requiring more frequent pumping, and possibly causing wastewater to back up into your home.
- Avoid pouring grease down the drain. Grease sticks to the inside of sewer pipes which can eventually cause sewage overflows. Liquid fabric softeners also contribute to scum in the septic tank.
- Minimize the use of a garbage disposal. Ground waste can clog the system. It is better to compost or throw it in the garbage can.
- Protect the drainfield. Avoid placing heavy equipment or impermeable surfaces such as above ground pools or patios over your drainfield. Grass is the best cover. Divert rain and surface water flowing from patios, roofs, etc. away from your drainfield.
- Keep trees and shrubs at a distance. Roots can plug or break pipes.
- Look for signs of a failing system and seek advice. If you suspect that your system is failing (you notice slow draining sinks or showers, soggy and bright green grass over the absorption field, foul odors, etc.) contact your local septic inspection officer.