

Town of Guilford
Water Pollution Control Authority
Health Department
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50 Boston Street
Town Hall South, Guilford, CT 06437

Septic Care & Maintenance for the Homeowner

Your Septic System Explained

Caring for Your Septic System

Proper Maintenance

Pumping out your septic tank on a regular schedule is important for removing sludge and extending the life of the leaching fields. The frequency of pumpouts is dependent on several factors such as the presence of a kitchen garbage grinder, size and age of tank and daily water use. Small tanks (less than 1000 gallons) or two-compartment tanks with garbage grinders may need to be pumped out every 2 to 3 years. Larger tanks (1250 gallon or greater) with minimal water use may need a pump out once every 4 to 5 years. Your septic pumper can evaluate the sludge buildup in your tank and recommend the optimum pumping frequency. As a minimum, the Town of Guilford has a mandatory five year pumpout requirement.

Current installations require a removable filter at the tank outlet to protect and extend the life of the drainfield system. This must be cleaned when the tank is emptied. A properly designed and maintained septic system requires minimal care, typically costs less than sewer fees and keeps water on site for replenishment of plants and wells.

Neglect or abuse of your septic system can cause it to fail.

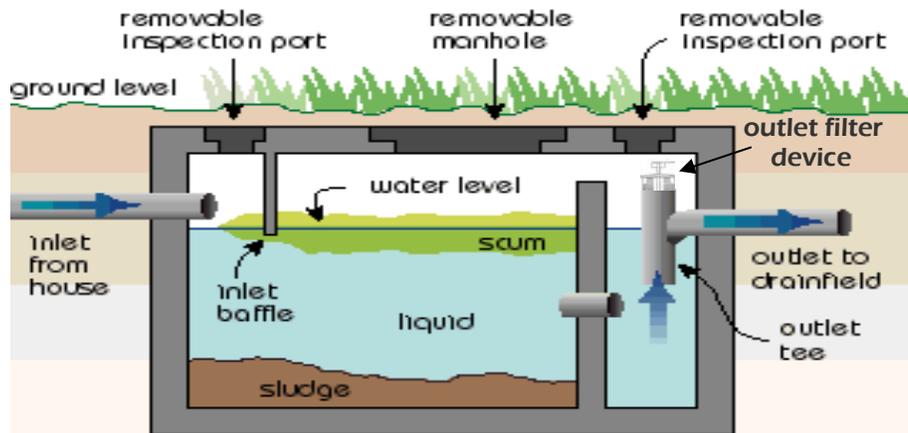
Failing septic systems can:

- Cause a serious health threat to your family and neighbors, or put thousands of water supply users at risk if you live in a public water supply watershed
- Degrade the environment, especially lakes, streams and groundwater
- Be very expensive to repair
- Reduce the value of your property.

Know the signs of a failing system.

- sewage over the drainfield (especially after storms)
- lush, green growth over the drainfields;
- slow-draining toilets or drains
- sewer odors.

Tanks installed as of July 2000 are required to have two chambers and two cleanout access points, as well as an outlet filter. Access manholes must be a minimum of 17 inches wide. *Tanks installed before this date may have different configurations.* Older tanks should be replaced with one of current design. Systems with drainfields uphill from the tank require a pump, two tanks and wiring for the pump and alarm on two different circuits.



Tips to Avoid Trouble

DO learn the location of your septic system and drainfield. Keep a sketch of it handy for service visits. Leave the area over a drainfield undisturbed with only a mowed grass cover. Roots from trees or shrubs may clog and damage your drain lines. Pavement over the field prevents evaporation and easy inspection.

DO have your tank pumped out and system inspected every 5 years, more often if your household is large or uses large quantities of water, by a licensed septic contractor (in the yellow pages or contact your local health department). The filter at the outflow baffle should be checked, cleaned or replaced at the same time.

DO have your pumper report to you on the condition of your system. Keep a record of pumping, inspections, and other maintenance.

DO practice water conservation. Repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets, run washing machines and dishwashers only when full, stagger loads, avoid long showers, and use water saving features in faucets, showerheads and toilets.

DO divert roof drains and surface water from driveways and hillsides away from the septic system. Keep sump pumps and house footing drains away from the system.

DO take leftover hazardous household chemicals to your approved hazardous waste collection center for disposal.

DO use low-phosphate liquid detergents and toilet paper safe for septic systems

Tips to Avoid Trouble

DON'T allow anyone to drive or park over any part of the system.

DON'T make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required health department permit. Use professional licensed septic contractors when needed. Do not allow tanks to be power washed or disinfected.

DON'T use commercial septic tank additives. Some of these products contain organic solvents and will pollute groundwater.

DON'T use your septic system as a trash can by dumping nondegradables down your toilet or drains. Also, don't poison your system and the groundwater by pouring harmful chemicals down the drain. These chemicals can kill the beneficial bacteria that treat your wastewater.

DON'T backwash water softeners or other well treatment systems into your septic system.

Keep the following materials out of your septic system:*

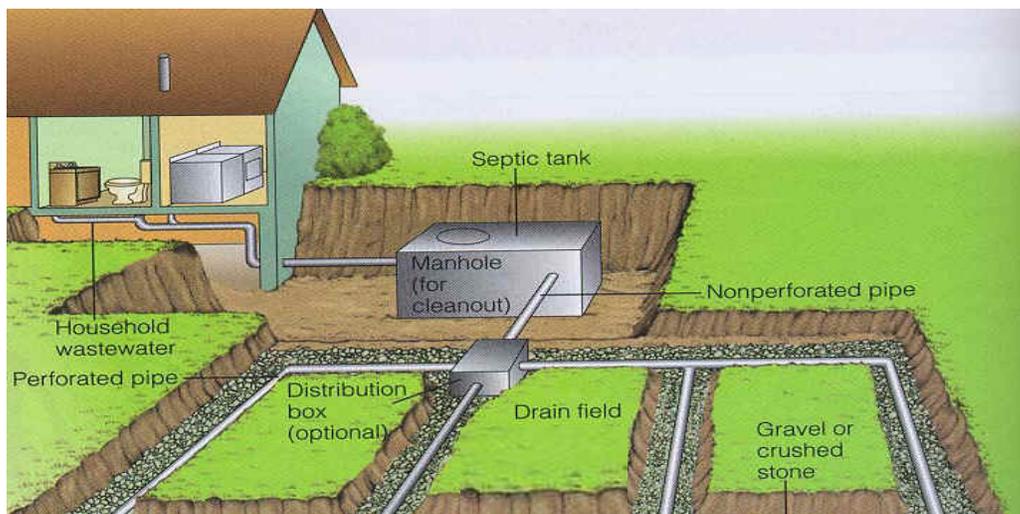
NONDEGRADABLES: grease, cigarette butts, cat litter, disposable diapers, plastics, paper towels, facial tissues or personal hygiene items.

POISONS: gasoline, oil, paint, paint thinner, pesticides, antifreeze, pool water, water-softener discharges, prescription medicines, and excess household cleaners, including bleach.

* Garbage disposals are not recommended for residential septic systems; they will increase the amount of solids in your tank by as much as 50% and could clog your system requiring expensive repairs. If you do have one, use it sparingly and have your system pumped more often.

Septic Systems Explained

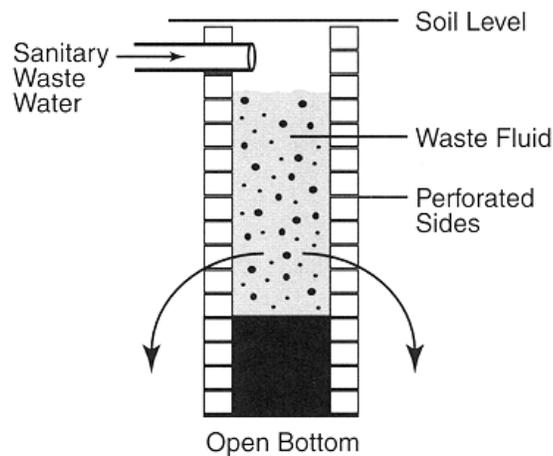
Septic systems are individual wastewater treatment systems that use the soil to treat small wastewater flows, usually from individual homes. They are typically used in rural or large lot settings where centralized wastewater treatment is impractical and unnecessary.



Septic Systems Explained

There are many types of septic systems in use today. While all septic systems are individually designed for each site, most septic systems are based on the same principles.

Septic systems are not complicated! A septic system consists of a septic tank, a distribution box and a drainfield, all connected by pipes which called conveyance lines. Your septic system treats your household wastewater by temporarily holding it in the septic tank where heavy solids and lighter scum are allowed to separate from the wastewater. This separation process is known as primary treatment. The solids stored in the tank are decomposed by bacteria and should be removed, by a licensed septic tank pumper every five years. After the partially treated wastewater leaves the tank, it flows into a distribution box, which separates this flow evenly into a network of drainfield trenches. Drainage holes at the bottom of each line allow the wastewater to drain into gravel trenches for temporary storage. This slowly seeps into the subsurface soil where it is further treated and purified (secondary treatment) before replenishing the ground water and eventually flowing to a stream or other body of water. Some homes may still have a cesspool, an underground tank that stores sewage with an inlet pipe, but no outlet pipe. A cesspool basic design is shown below. If you suspect that you have a cesspool waste disposal system, call your local health department.



**Typical
Dry Well**

For more information and assistance about septic systems and their maintenance, you can contact us at the address or phone number above.