

You can prolong the life of your septic system by conserving water and having your tank routinely cleaned by a reputable, experienced contractor. You may wish to understand more about how your septic system functions before learning more about our services. One good source of information can be found on this EPA website.

### **YOUR SEPTIC TANK - WHAT IT DOES**

The most important component of your septic system is the septic tank - an underground, waterproof container designed to do several things:

- Receive wastewater from your home
- Separate solids from liquids
- Partially digest organic matter
- Store solids
- Deliver relatively clear liquid to the absorption field

In a properly functioning tank, solids and liquids are effectively separated. Solids and partially decomposed sludge settle at the bottom of the tank and accumulate while a scum of lightweight material (including fats and greases) rises to the top. The clear liquid that settles between the scum and the sludge layers carries over to the absorption field.

### **THE PROBLEMS**

If the settled scum layer is not routinely pumped out, the septic system will fail. The scum and sludge depth will increase, the effective detention time will decrease, and more solids will enter the absorption field. Over time, the field will clog and water will begin to seep to the yard surface above the drainage field, or perhaps in nearby areas of the yard which are downhill from the field itself, and/or there may be sewage backups in your home. These indications of a problem are of course most likely to show up during wet and rainy conditions.

### **THE SOLUTION**

You can prolong the life of your septic tank system by annually inspecting the sludge and scum accumulation and having the tank routinely pumped. Inspect your tank to determine the amount of accumulated solids. If the level is high contact your septic contractor to thoroughly clean the tank. The contractor should uncover the main access and remove all of the liquids and solids.

During the pump process insure that the contractor DOES NOT pump through the small 4" - 6" inspection pipe located over the inlet baffle of your tank. The contractor should also check the condition of the baffles. If the baffles are missing or damaged, this could quickly lead to sludge flowing out of the tank to your drainage field, which will effectively block its effectiveness in the proper functioning of the system, so replacement of missing or damaged baffles is a very important maintenance step. Older tanks may have only two baffles, one for the inlet and one for the outlet, but the standards have changed. Now tanks generally have four baffles, i.e., the inlet and outlet piping to and from the tank are each protected by double baffles.

## **WATER CONSERVATION**

Even if you properly clean the septic tank, you can still cause system failure by hydraulically overloading it, i.e., by using more water than your system was designed to handle. To prevent hydraulic overload we recommend that you install water conservation shower heads, water saving aerators for the faucets, and water conservation toilets. You can reduce your water usage by up to 30% by using a combination of these devices.

We also recommend spacing your laundry loads out throughout the week. This prevents water from short circuiting your septic tank which once again allows solids to enter the soil absorption system.

In conclusion, by having your tank routinely pumped and conserving water, you'll be doing your part to prolong the life of your soil absorption system. Remember that it's relatively inexpensive to pump your septic tank, but it costs thousands of dollars to replace your soil absorption system.

## **SOME FACTS ABOUT YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM**

1. Contractors should pump the tank through the manhole, not the inspection pipe. This minimizes the risk of harm to the inlet and outlet baffles, and maximizes the ability to properly clean the solids from the septic tank.
2. Special chemicals are not needed to start bacterial activity in the septic tank.
3. Special additives are not needed to improve or assist tank operation once it is underway. No chemical additives are needed to "clean" septic tanks. Additive producers claim that these products eliminate the need for septic tank pumping. Unfortunately, such compounds may actually cause sludge "building" and decrease sludge digestion. They are not necessary for proper operation and are often of questionable value to the overall health of your system.