

Recommended Septic System Maintenance

- Have your tank pumped out about every three to five years by a DEQ licensed pumper (see Pumping Frequency Table). You can find licensed pumpers in the phone book or online.
- Have the tank inspected every three years for function and sludge accumulation.
- Conserve water to avoid overloading the system.
- Avoid or limit the use of an in-sink garbage disposal. Fats, grease and solids can clog the drainfield.
- Don't flush anything except waste and toilet paper.
- Avoid harsh chemicals such as those in drain clog removers, gasoline, oil, pesticides and other cleaners. These can kill the beneficial 'bugs' that treat the wastewater.
- Don't use septic system additives. These products generally do not help and some may even be harmful to your system.
- Know the location of the tank and drainfield. Keep maintenance records. (If you don't have drawings of your system, check with Clackamas County to see whether records exist.)
- Don't drive, build or pave over the drainfield. This could crush the pipes or compact the soil, negatively impacting the treatment process.
- Don't plant trees on top of the drainfield — roots could damage the system.
- Keep roof drains, sump pumps and other rainwater drainage systems away from your drainfield area, as excess water slows down or stops the wastewater treatment process.

SEPTIC INSPECTION RECORDS

DATE	COST	MAINTENANCE PROVIDER	DESCRIPTION



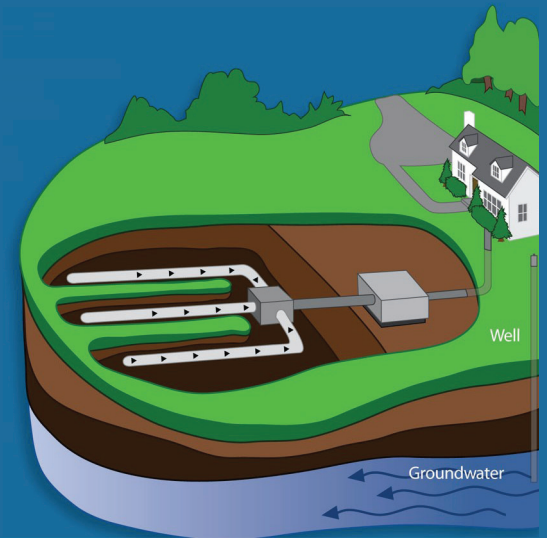
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SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

A Clackamas County guide to the proper care and maintenance of your Onsite Wastewater Treatment System



Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

Onsite wastewater treatment systems (also known as septic systems) are the most common wastewater treatment systems in rural, unsewered areas of Clackamas County. Septic systems require routine maintenance to keep them functioning properly.

How Septic Systems Work...

The septic tank captures wastewater from the home. Solid material settles in the bottom of the tank (sludge) or floats on top (scum). When the accumulated sludge and scum reach a certain level, the tank needs to be pumped out by a licensed septic system pumper in order to keep the system running properly.

The liquid portion of the waste (effluent) passes from the tank into the drainfield, where it is absorbed into the ground through perforated pipes and treated by soil organisms to remove harmful bacteria, viruses and nutrients. This liquid portion eventually reaches the groundwater.

Why should I maintain my system?

Saves You Money

Regular maintenance fees of \$450 to \$600 every three to four years is a bargain compared to the cost of repairing or replacing a malfunctioning system, which can cost between \$3,000 and \$30,000 or more.

Protects Your Property Value

An unusable septic system or one in disrepair will lower your property value, and could expose you to costly legal liability.

Keeps You and Your Neighbors Healthy

Household wastewater is loaded with disease-causing bacteria and viruses, as well as high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus. If a septic system is well-maintained and working properly, it will remove most of these pollutants. Insufficiently treated sewage from septic systems can cause groundwater and/or surface water contamination, which can spread disease to humans and animals.

Operation and Maintenance

Owners of onsite systems must operate and maintain their systems in compliance with all permit conditions and applicable requirements in this division and must not create a public health hazard or pollute public waters. [OAR 340-71-0130 General Standards, Prohibitions, and Requirements.](#)

Inspection is a must and pumping may be required to keep your system in good working order.

Pumping Frequency

How often your septic tank needs to be pumped depends on the size of the tank, the number of people in the household, and the volume of solids in the wastewater (example, use of a garbage disposal).

TANK (Gallons)	HOUSEHOLD SIZE				
	1 person	2 people (ppl)	3 ppl	4 ppl	5 ppl
500	5.8 yrs	2.6 yrs	1.5 yrs	1 yr	0.7 yrs
750	9.1 yrs	4.2 yrs	2.6 yrs	1.8 yrs	1.3 yrs
1,000	12.4 yrs	5.9 yrs	3.7 yrs	2.6 yrs	2 yrs
1,250	15.6 yrs	7.5 yrs	4.8 yrs	3.4 yrs	2.6 yrs
1,500	18.9 yrs	9.1 yrs	5.9 yrs	4.2 yrs	3.3 yrs

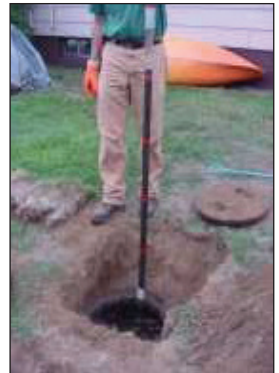
EPA, 1993. Guidance Specifying Management Measures for Sources of Nonpoint Pollution in Coastal Waters. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publication number: EPA 840-B-92-002. Available online at: <http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/czara/index.cfm>

Watch for Signs of Failure

- Wastewater backing up into household drains
- Bright green, spongy grass on the drainfield, even during dry weather
- Pooling water or muddy soil around your septic system or in your basement
- A strong odor around the septic tank and drainfield

Call a septic professional if you notice any of these signs. One call could save you thousands of dollars!

Resources and Available Financial Assistance



Clackamas River Water Providers

at 503-723-3510

<https://www.clackamasproviders.org/septic-system-assistance-program/>

Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation

District at 503-210-6000

<https://conservationdistrict.org/>