



Protecting Your Home, Caring for Your Septic System

Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Environmental Health

Your home is one of your greatest assets. In fact, for families of all kinds, it is a place of comfort and a source of great pride. But, did you realize that you can better protect the value of your home by taking good care of your septic system? Without a doubt, a key reason to maintain your septic system is money! Failing septic systems are not only expensive to repair and replace, they are something you can avoid.

Simple Steps, Long-lasting Results

To avoid flushing thousands of dollars in repairs down the drain, keep your septic system in good working condition. This type of safe treatment of sewage prevents the spread of infection and disease and protects your water. Also, when a septic tank is working properly, it naturally removes most of the pollutants that can make you sick. If you follow these steps, your septic system will function to protect your health and your investment.

Remember the 3 Ps

PUMP

- Pump your tank at least every 3 to 5 years to help ensure it continues to work properly.
- Waste and kitchen garbage disposal material can build up over time, so pumping your system is an important step.
- Have your septic system inspected every 3 years by a licensed sewage disposal company to check for any problems.
- Having your system inspected and pumped on a regular basis is a bargain when you consider the cost of replacing the entire system.

PROTECT

- Do not drive over or park vehicles on your septic tank or drainfield.

- Plant only grass over and near your drainfield to avoid damage from roots.
- Make sure your gutter downspouts are directed away from the drainfield area.
- Fix leaky toilets and dripping faucets as soon as possible.

PREVENT

- Use your toilet to flush human waste only. Anything other than human waste can clog and possibly damage your septic system.
- Do not pour household products, such as cleansers, medicine, auto fluids, paint and lawn care products down the drain. These items can pollute surface and ground water, which supplies your drinking water. It may also end up in your local rivers, lakes and coastal waters.
- Compost your kitchen scraps rather than use your garbage disposal, to help your septic system last longer.

Do Not Waste Water Your system is sized on an expected average use of 50 gallons per person per day. Dripping faucets can waste about 2,000 gallons of water each year. Leaky toilets can waste as much as 200 gallons each day. Overloading your system with water is the number one cause of failure. So, remember to:

- Fill the bathtub with only as much water as you need.

- Turn off faucets while shaving or brushing your teeth.
- Run the dishwasher and clothes washer only when they are full.
- Make sure all faucets are completely turned off when not in use.
- Install water saving showerheads that release low levels of water.
- Make sure your toilets and faucets do not leak.

Do Not Overload Your Drainfield

- Keep roof drains and other rainwater or surface drainage systems away from the drainfield.
- Flooding the drainfield with too much water slows down or stops the treatment processes and can cause plumbing to back up.
- Distribute your laundry loads over the week.
- Your washing machine discharges 40 to 50 gallons every wash load and doing load after load on a single day can stress and overload your system.
- Consider composting rather than using a garbage disposal. This reduces the burden on your septic system while providing compost to make your garden grow.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

■ **For additional information on your septic system,** contact the environmental health section at your county health department. You can also visit U.S. EPA sites: www.epa.gov/own/onsite or www.epa.gov/own/water-conservation.

■ **For a listing of licensed septic tanks contractors visit:** FloridaHealth.gov/healthy-environments/ and select "Onsite Sewage Programs."

