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## **Septic Tank and Leaching Maintenance**

- 1.) Pump septic tank every 3-5 years.
- 2.) Clean effluent filter every 6 months by removing and spraying off the water.
- 3.) Check distribution box or drop box every 6 months, and switch leach fields by switching PVC elbow to other leach line, if applicable.
- 4.) Always protect the drop box, distribution box, and risers from being damaged.
- 5.) Never place structures or damage the replacement area by excavating, planting trees, etc.
- 6.) Never use septic tank additives.
- 7.) Always divert surface water away from the septic tank/aeration tank and leaching area.
- 8.) Make sure to renew a service contract with a registered service provider for maintenance of aeration system when it expires.
- 9.) Plant vegetation (grass) over leaching area to induce transpiration of liquid in leach field.
- 10.) Conserve water at all times to prevent failure of septic system.



## Ohio Department of Health Bureau of Environmental Health

### Know Your Household Sewage System

"To improve and protect the health of all Ohioans"

246 North High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

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614-466-1390

- Learn about your household sewage system. Obtain and keep a sketch of the system with a detailed record of repairs, pumping, inspections, and other maintenance activities.
- Have your household sewage system inspected and maintained regularly.
- Keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspection and cleaning. Install risers if necessary.
- Call a registered sewage system contractor or your local health department if you experience problems or if there are any signs of system failure.
- Always obtain required permits when making or allowing repairs to your system.
- Divert sources of water, like roof drains, footer drains, and sump pumps away from the system. Excess water saturates the soil leading to system failure.
- Keep a good vegetative cover over the system in order to help remove excess water and prevent erosion.
- **Do Not** allow anyone to drive or park anything over any part of the septic system.
- Never dig or build anything over your system. This includes hard surfaces such as concrete or asphalt.
- Conserve water to avoid overloading the system. Promptly repair leaky faucets or toilets, and install water saving devices.
- Don't use septic tank additives. These products usually do not help and can be harmful to the operation of your system.
- Eliminate or reduce the use of a garbage disposal. The additional waste produced by a garbage disposal will lead to extra maintenance requirements.
- Don't use you toilet or disposal as a trash can. Coffee grounds, dental floss, disposable diapers, kitty litter, sanitary napkins, tampons, cigarette butts, condoms, fat, grease, oil, automotive fluids and paper towels should never be disposed of in the system.
- Never pour chemicals or cleaners such as paints, varnishes, thinners and pesticides down the drain/toilet. Harsh chemicals can kill beneficial bacteria that treat wastewater.
- Never climb down into a septic tank. The natural treatment process in septic tanks produces toxic gases that can kill.

### Protect Your Investment

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# Ohio Department of Health Bureau of Environmental Health

## Know Your Septic Tank

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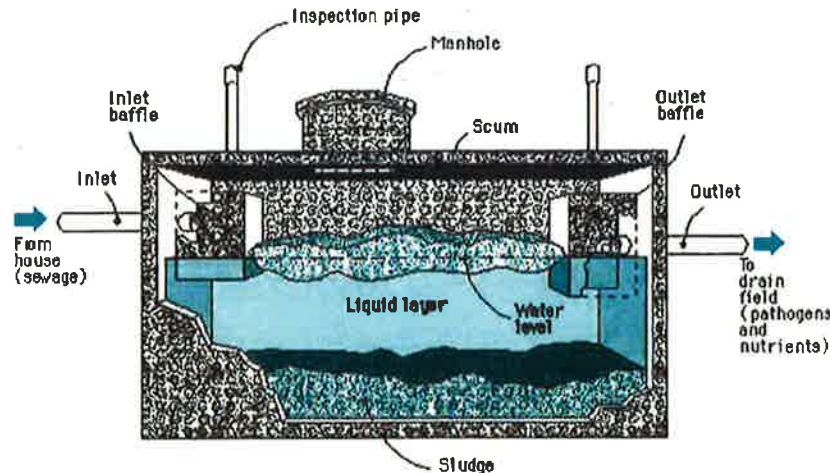
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Most households that are not served by public sewers depend on a household sewage system to collect and treat wastewater. Your septic tank is the primary treatment device that collects and settles wastewater from your home. Your household sewage system represents a significant investment that you will want to protect. Failed sewage systems are costly to replace and proper ongoing maintenance can extend their life. Preventive maintenance will not only protect your investment, but will also protect the environment and the public health.

What is preventive maintenance? An example is changing the oil in your car. Industry recommends that every 3–5 thousand miles that you have the oil changed. This removes the build-up of sediments that can decrease the performance of the engine. Another example is pumping your septic tank. The chart on the back of this fact sheet is the industry recommended pumping frequency rate. Pumping the septic tank removes the build-up of sediments that reduces the performance of the tank that would lead to failure of the absorption field.

- The septic tank holds the wastewater in the tank long enough for solids and liquids to separate. The wastewater forms three layers inside the tank. Sediments lighter than water (such as greases and oils) float to the top forming a layer of scum. Sediments heavier than water settle at the bottom of the tank forming a layer of sludge. This leaves a middle layer of partially clarified wastewater.



- The layers of sludge and scum remain in the septic tank where bacteria found naturally in the wastewater work to break the solids down. The sludge and scum that cannot be broken down are retained in the tank until the tank is pumped.

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Maintain accurate maintenance records. These records will be helpful if problems occur, and will be valuable to the next owner of the home. The following chart can assist in establishing a good maintenance program.

Date	Nature of Work (Tank Pumped, Inspection, Repairs)	Contractor Name	Cost

- Inspect or have your septic tank inspected once each year. Ensure that the buildup of sludge and scum does not limit the ability to settle solids. Check to ensure the baffles or tees are in good condition. If the tank has an effluent filter, have it checked and cleaned if needed. Check for root intrusion or evidence of ground or surface water entering the tank.
- Your local health department may assist you with your annual inspection.



Many septic tank owners believe that if they haven't had any problems, they don't need to have their septic tanks pumped. If the solids are not removed, eventually they will flow out of the tank damaging the rest of the system. The following chart can be used as a guide to assist you as to when to have your tank pumped.

Tank Size (GAL)	Number of People Living in House							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
750	9.1	4.2	2.6	1.8	1.3	1	0.7	0.6
1000	12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2	1.5	1.2	1
1250	15.6	7.5	4.8	3.4	2.6	2	1.7	1.4
1500	18.9	9.1	5.9	4.2	3.3	2.6	2.1	1.8
1750	22.1	10.7	6.9	5	3.9	3.1	2.6	2.2
2000	25.4	12.4	8	5.9	4.5	3.7	3.1	2.6
2500	31.9	15.6	10.2	7.5	5.9	4.8	4	4

**Pumping Frequency In Years**

OSU Extension AEX-740-98

- Always use a registered septage hauler approved by your local health department.
- More frequent pumping is necessary if a garbage disposal is used.
- Biological and chemical additives are not necessary, may cause harm to the system, and do not eliminate the need for pumping the septic tank.

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