

Maintaining a Septic System

The effectiveness of a septic system will depend on how it is operated and maintained. The following is a guide on how to achieve the most from a system.

Points to consider:

- Every property that has an effluent pump out system should be on a scheduled service frequency to maintain the approval to operate the system.
- Septic cleanouts must be conducted between 3 to 5 years depending on the care each system receives.
- All service pipes (standpipes) should be clear of obstruction and within easy access for pump out.
- Effluent systems that have switches for booster pumps must be accessible and that both the switch and the pump are in safe working order.

Troubleshooting and warning signs:

Look out for a few warning signs that signal there are troubles with the septic tank. Ensure that these problems are attended to immediately to protect the health of residents and the environment.

Look out for the following:

- Water that drains too slowly,
- Drain pipes that gurgle and make noises when air bubbles are forced back through the system,
- Sewerage smells indicate a serious problem,
- Water is backing up into the sink which may indicate that the septic system is already failing.

Tips for a Healthy Septic System:

- Conserve water by using water saving devices.
- Provide additives to assist biological activity of the system.
- Ensure the tank is water proof and does not leak or allow rain water to enter, and ensure the tank is mosquito-proofed.
- Have your septic tank serviced annually by contractors.
- Arrange a clean-out every 3-5 years to prevent sludge build-up which may clog the pipes and absorption trenches.
- Keep a record of pumping, inspections and other maintenance.
- Use biodegradable detergents such as concentrates with low phosphorous. Always check household products for suitability for use with a septic system.
- **Do not** allow any foreign materials such as nappies, sanitary napkins, condoms and other hygiene products to enter the system.
- **Do not** install and use a garbage grinder or spa bath if the system is not designed for it.
- **Do not** put bleaches, disinfectants, whiteners, nappy soakers and spot removers into the septic tank via the sink, washing machine or toilet.
- **Do not** put fats and oils down the drain and keep food waste out of the system.
- **Do not** use ammonia based products as they are especially damaging to the organisms within the septic tank.
- **Do not** use more than the recommended amounts of detergents.

Please note that during excessive rain periods, rainwater may infiltrate the tanks on the property causing an increase in the volume of effluent in the collection well. Keeping the tank lid clear of grass, plants and weeds is a good way of caring for your tank, if cracks appear in the lid and noticed it is important to get them fixed.