

SEPTIC SYSTEMS EXPLAINED

Septic systems are private sewage disposal systems that use the soil to treat small wastewater flows, usually from individual homes. They are typically used in rural or large lot settings where centralized wastewater treatment is impractical.

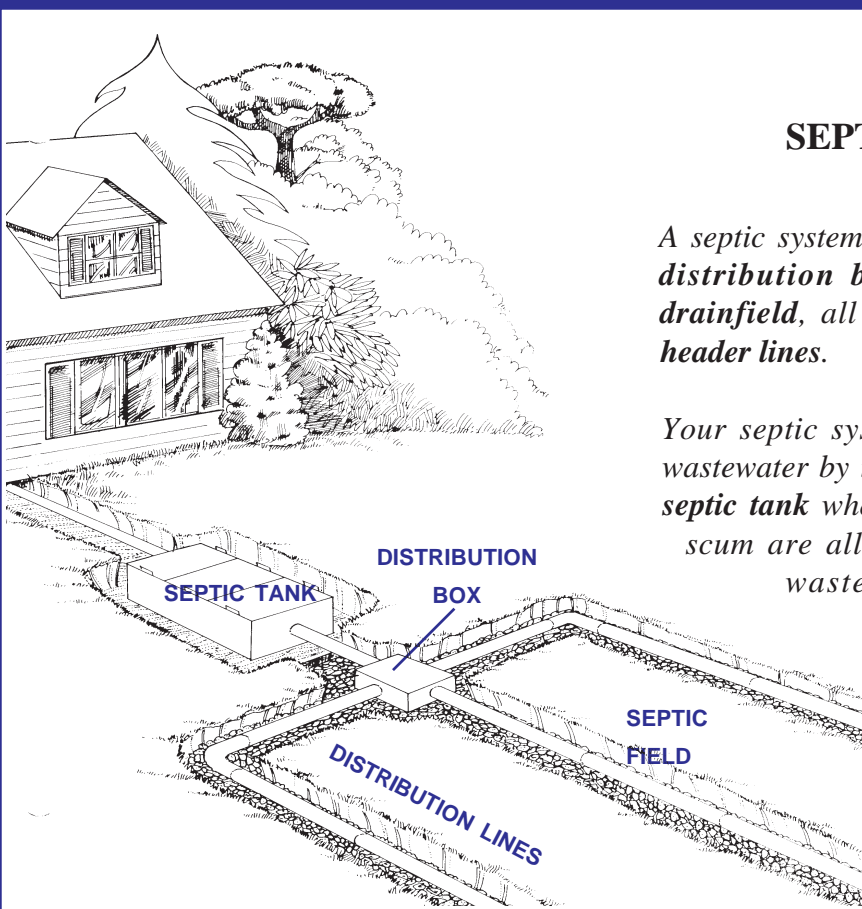
There are many types of septic systems in use today. While all septic systems are individually designed for each site, most septic systems are based on the same principles.

SEPTIC LAYOUT

*A septic system consists of a **septic tank**, a **distribution box or drop boxes** and a **drainfield**, all connected by pipes called **header lines**.*

*Your septic system treats your household wastewater by temporarily holding it in the **septic tank** where heavy solids and lighter scum are allowed to separate from the wastewater. This separation process is known as **primary treatment**. The solids stored in the tank are decomposed by bacteria and later removed, along with the lighter scum, by a professional septic tank pumper.*

*After the partially treated wastewater leaves the tank, it flows into a **distribution box or drop boxes** which separate the flow into a network of **distribution lines**. Drainage holes in each line allow the wastewater to drain into gravel trenches for temporary storage. This **effluent** then slowly seeps into the subsurface soil where it is further treated and purified (**secondary treatment**). A properly functioning septic system does not pollute the groundwater.*



RECORD OF SERVICE

DATE	WORK DONE	CONTRACTOR

KNOW YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

Date installed: _____

Health Dept. permit number: _____

Name of licensed installer: _____

Type of system: Conventional At Grade
 Mound Chamber Other

Aeration Unit: ___ Yes ___ No

Aeration Unit Service Provider: _____

Lift Station: ___ Yes ___ No

Alarm Location: _____

System designed for ___ # of bedrooms or ___ gpd.

Tank size: _____

Distance from system components to well: _____

Distance from tank to house: _____

Distance from seepage field to house: _____

Designated future replacement area: ___ Yes ___ No

Septic system plan available: ___ Yes ___ No

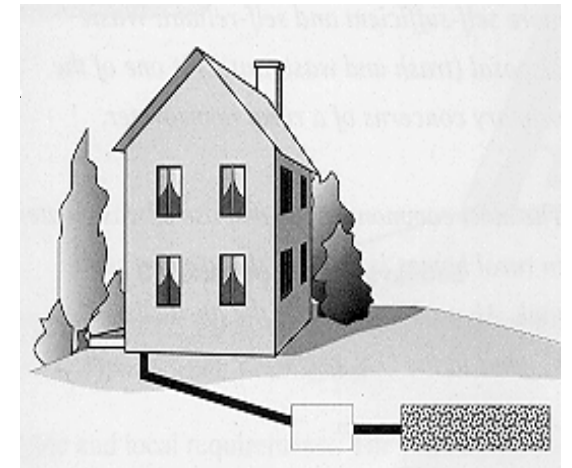
For More Information

For more information about maintenance or inspection of your septic system, contact the Environmental Health Division at 815-334-4585

SEPTIC INFORMATION

**EVERYTHING
YOU WANTED
TO KNOW
ABOUT YOUR
SEPTIC
SYSTEM**

FOR HOMEOWNERS



MCHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
 DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
 2200 NORTH SEMINARY AVENUE
 WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS 60098
 PH: 815-334-4585
 FAX: 815-334-4637
 WEBSITE: www.mcdh.info

CARING FOR YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

The accumulated scum and solids of the septic tank should be pumped out every 2 to 3 years to prolong the life of your system. Septic systems must be maintained regularly to continue functioning properly.

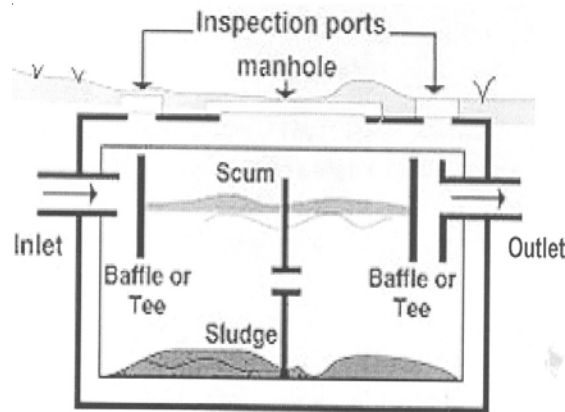
Neglect or abuse of your septic system can cause it to fail. Improper use or maintenance of a septic system can result in one or all of the following problems:

- The spread of many serious diseases associated with sewage which include cholera, infectious hepatitis and typhoid fever.
- The ponding of sewage on the ground surface creating a favorable breeding area for mosquitoes and other insects.
- The costly damage of sewage backing up inside a home.

- Very expensive repair and/or replacement costs of a new septic system.
- Pollution of groundwater, wells, lakes and rivers.

Warning signs of a failing septic system:

- Sewage surfacing over the drainfield (especially after storms).
- Sewage back-ups in the house.
- Lush, green growth over the drainfield.
- Slow draining toilets or drains.
- Objectional and undesirable sewage odors.



While typically designed to hold 1250 gallons of liquid, the size of the tank varies depending upon the number of bedrooms in the home. The purpose of the septic tank is to separate the solids from the liquids.

The solids, in the form of sludge, which collect at the bottom of the tank, and scum, which floats on the top of the wastewater, remain in the tank and are pumped out periodically (typically every 2 to 3 years). The wastewater is passed on to the septic field.

NONDEGRADABLES:
grease, disposable
diapers, plastics, etc.
POISONS:
gasoline, oil, paint,
paint thinner,
pesticides,
antifreeze, etc.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF USING YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

DO have your tank pumped out and system inspected every 2 to 3 years by a licensed septic pumper (listed in the yellow pages).

DO keep a record of pumping, inspections, and other maintenance. Use the back page of this brochure to record maintenance information.

DO practice water conservation. Repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets, run washing machines and dishwashers only when full, avoid long showers, and use water-saving features in faucets, shower heads and toilets.

DO learn the location of your septic system and drainfield. Keep an accurate layout of it handy for service visits.

DO divert roof drains and surface water from driveways and hillsides away from the septic system. Keep sump pumps and house footing drains away from the septic system as well.

DO take leftover hazardous household chemicals to your approved hazardous waste collection center for disposal. Use bleach, disinfectants, and drain and toilet bowl cleaners in accordance with product labels.

DO annually inspect the condition of septic tank parts (access lids, baffles, liquid level and thickness of scum layer).

DO install lint traps on clothes washer and discard grease in garbage cans.

DO contact the Health Department for information on hot tub, water softener, and swimming pool discharges and effluent filters.

DON'T ever put your head inside a septic tank due to the possible presence of toxic gases.

DON'T use your toilet as a trash can by dumping nondegradables (i.e. grease, sanitary napkins, disposable diapers, anything plastic, condoms, paper towels, cigarettes, etc.) down your toilets or drains.

DON'T put toxic substances in your septic system such as paints, oils, acids or solvents. These substances do not break down and could contaminate drinking water supplies.

DON'T ever drive cars or heavy equipment over the septic system.

DON'T use septic tank additives. These products have been known to have no benefit and may harm the septic system.

DON'T build over the septic field. This includes decks, driveways and above ground swimming pools.

DON'T make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required health department permit. Always use professional licensed septic contractors.

DON'T plant certain species of trees in close proximity to the field. Roots are responsible for many costly failures. A brochure on trees and septic systems is available at the McHenry County Department of Health.

DON'T install garbage disposals unless your septic system is designed to accommodate one.

DON'T wash several loads of laundry within a one day period.