

## **Pump Conventional Septic Tank System Fact Sheet**

### ***What is a septic tank system?***

The septic tank is a long-standing method for disposing of sewage from individual homes in rural and suburban areas. The purpose of a septic tank system is to provide adequate treatment and safe disposal of household wastewaters produced in the bathroom, kitchen, and laundry. A septic tank system with pump, consists of three parts: the septic tank, pump with pump tank and the soil drainfield.

### ***How does the system work?***

As wastewater flows into the septic tank, the heavier solid materials settle to the bottom and the lighter greases and fats float to the top. The liquid flows out of the tank to a second tank that has a pump. When the liquid reaches a set level, the pump starts to pump the liquid to the soil drain field where it seeps into the soil and is purified before it reaches the groundwater. Since proper functioning of a septic system depends on the soil on the property, a conventional septic system can only be used in soils that will provide adequate absorption and purification of the sewage. Septic systems installed in unsuitable soils run a substantial risk of malfunctioning. For this reason, state law and local rules and regulations require a comprehensive soil/site evaluation before construction begins on a home or septic system.

### ***Do I need to maintain my system?***

Once a septic system is properly sited and installed, maintenance is essential. A system usually fails because it is overloaded with more water than the soil can absorb or because the tiny openings in the soil have become clogged. A failing system is not only an inconvenience and an expense to the homeowner, it is also a threat to water quality and to your family's health.

### ***What are the signs of a failing system?***

1. Damp, mushy ground above the drain field or tanks, especially in rainy weather
2. Standing water with an oily film or dark color and odor problems
3. Household plumbing fixtures that back up or don't drain properly
4. If your pump alarm goes off it is to alert you that the pump is not functioning, call your septic tank contractor immediately.

***Proper care and maintenance can save you thousands of dollars in repair.***

## **Tips for maintaining your pump conventional septic system**

- Be familiar with the location of your septic tank, pump tank and drainfield.
- Check with the previous homeowner to see how the septic system was maintained.
- Have your septic tank and pump tank pumped every 3-4 years.
- Avoid a large number of trees or shrubbery which will cause a clogging of the systems by roots growing into the lines.
- Provide adequate surface drainage away from the septic drain field. Divert downspouts and natural runoff around the drainfield.
- Don't allow heavy vehicles to drive over the tanks or drainfield because they could crush the pipes.
- Avoid excessive use of bleach, bowl cleaners, and drain cleaners. Limit the amount of grease discharged into the septic tank.
- Don't use a garbage disposal if you have a septic tank. The solids will clog the pipes and the soil.
- Repair leaking faucets and commode tanks immediately.
- Restrict water usage during showers/baths, etc., and avoid washing small loads of clothes without reducing the water level setting of the washing machine.
- Install water saving devices and low flush toilets.
- Do not water lawns over the drain field area.
- Avoid installation of additional plumbing fixtures without consulting the health department (i.e., hot tubs).
- Avoid adding enzymes and other advertised "miracle cures" to your septic tank.

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