

The Watering Hole

Is your septic santa ready?

SEPTIC TIPS

✓ Keep it Protected—Get it Inspected!

Have your septic tank inspected and pumped out by a licensed septic tank contractor as needed (on average every three to five years).

✓ Don't Strain your Drain!

Use water efficiently to avoid overtaxing your system. Fix household leaks, run the dishwasher and clothes washer only on full loads, and consider installing high-efficiency fixtures.

✓ Think at the Sink!

Do not pour grease, fats, or harmful chemicals like paints and solvents down your sink. They can clog or harm your system.

✓ Don't Overload the Commode!

Do not flush non-degradable items such as dental floss, diapers, coffee grounds, or feminine hygiene products.

✓ Shield your Field!

Care for your drainfield by only planting grass, not driving or parking on it, and reducing roof and surface water drainage near the drainfield.

Know your part, be SepticSmart!

Learn more at www.epa.gov/septicmart.

septicmart

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The stockings are hung, the tree is trimmed, and the presents are wrapped. Now that we are in the midst of the holiday season, you are probably making plans for holiday gatherings and hosting friends and family. There are probably a few questions you've asked yourself: Do you have gifts picked out for everyone? What food will you be preparing for get-togethers? But just as importantly is a question most people haven't asked themselves: Is your septic system as ready for guests as you are? The added stress of all the additional people using your system could be enough to push a normally adequate system over the edge.

To know if you have a septic issue, you first need to know the basics of your system and how it functions. A septic system is made up of two main components, the septic tank and the drainfield. It is important to know where these two parts are located so you can monitor them for issues and so you know where to send septic companies if you have an issue. When waste leaves your house, it first travels into the tank, where solids will settle out and scum will float to the top. This allows the liquid to clarify a bit before it runs to the drainfield. Once the clarified liquid, called effluent leaves the tank, it flows to the drainfield where it settles into the ground through stone in your drainfield. This is where the effluent is effectively treated before it re-enters the environment as water. The soil works to filter out any harmful nutrients, viruses or bacteria.

Once you know where your system is located, there are a few things you should keep an eye out for to ensure your system isn't failing. The first thing to be aware of is back-ups of the system.

These will be evident in your home, as you may have slow draining toilets, showers or sinks and you may see waste back up into these fixtures. This is a sign of a potential blockage in your pipes or tank and should be addressed immediately by a certified septic company or plumber. Another tell-tale sign of a failure is strong odors present near your system. If you smell waste, it may mean you need to have your system checked out. Lastly, you should keep an eye on your drainfield for any signs of surfacing of effluent. This will be very evident with snow on the ground. If you notice the ground over your drainfield is constantly wet, you may have a failed drainfield.

Just like with any part of your home, maintenance is key to ensuring your septic system functions properly for its entire lifespan. The average lifespan of a septic system is around 30 years, and you should have your system checked every year by a licensed professional. Typically, most systems require pumping every 2-3 years (this time can vary depending on how many people are using the system and the size of the system) to remove the solids from the tank that can build up and cause issues. Remember, proper septic system maintenance will not only protect your family and home, it will save you money in the long run and keep our water clean.

Don't let a septic disaster ruin your holiday fun! This time of year can become busy, but with these tips in mind, be sure to take a moment to check your septic system before your holiday get-together. Doing so will save you a lot of stress and problems rather than waiting to find out you have a problem with a house full of people.

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