

How to Maintain Your Septic System

Prevent costly repairs and protect local water resources



Septic System Maintenance is a Homeowner's Responsibility

Systems Must be Inspected and Pumped

- Conventional septic systems need an inspection by a professional at least every 3 years.
- Alternative septic systems, like mound systems, should be inspected annually.
- Septic tanks should be pumped when recommended by an inspector (generally every 3-5 years).

The number of occupants in your home, the amount of water you use, and the size of your septic tank will determine exactly how often you need to pump.

How a Septic System Works

Septic systems are underground wastewater treatment structures that use a combination of nature and proven technology to treat wastewater from plumbing produced by bathrooms, kitchens, drains, and laundry.

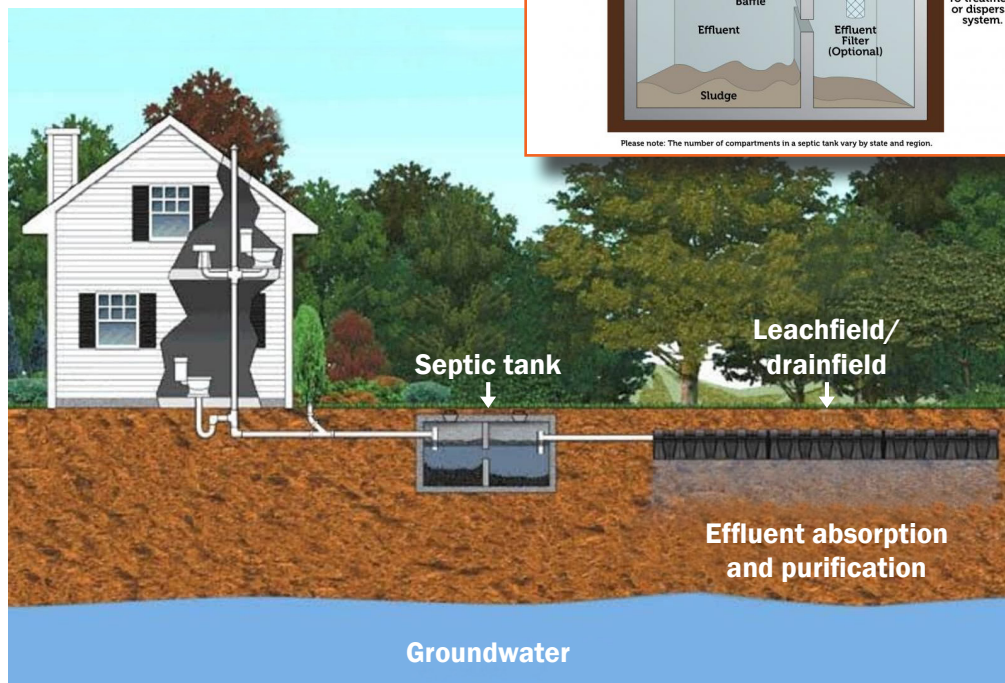
A typical septic system consists of a septic tank and a drainfield or leachfield.

The septic tank separates oils, grease, and solids from liquids (wastewater). Solids settle to the bottom of the tank where they are "digested" by bacteria. (This is the stuff that gets pumped out of the tank.)

Wastewater exits the tank into the leachfield, where it travels through perforated pipes and percolates through the soil. This process removes bacteria, viruses, and nutrients from the wastewater, before it discharges to groundwater.

Protect Your Leachfield

Never place anything heavy on top the leachfield, such as a patio, swimming pool, shed—or a parked car. Heavy items can compact the soil and crush the underground pipes.



Failure symptoms: Mind the signs!

A foul odor is not always the first sign of a malfunctioning septic system. Call a septic professional if you notice any of the following:

- Wastewater backing up into household drains.
- Bright green, spongy grass on the leachfield, especially during dry weather.
- Pooling water or muddy soil around your septic system or in your basement.
- A strong odor around the septic tank and leachfield.

Malfunctioning septic systems can discharge bacteria, viruses, and chemicals. When these pollutants are released, they eventually enter streams, rivers, lakes, and more—harming local ecosystems by killing native plants, fish, and shellfish.

Let us know if you have questions!

If you don't know what type of septic system you have, or for any septic related questions, contact Kevin Davis, Sharon's Health Agent for Engineering, 781-784-1525 x2317

For more information on septic systems, visit www.YourCleanWater.org/septic

How to Live with a Septic System

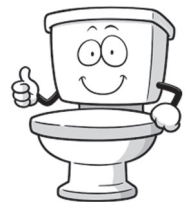
Limit Your Chemical Use

Beneficial bacteria are important for a healthy septic system. Anything that goes down the drain that kills bacteria can harm your septic system.

- Limit your use of harsh chemicals and antibacterial products such as bleach, ammonia and drain cleaners. Spot-clean with bleach instead of cleaning with full strength bleach products.
- Clear clogged drains with a plunger, boiling water, or a drain snake instead of chemicals.
- Never put paint, motor oil, pesticides or other household hazardous wastes down the drain. Bring them to the Town's Hazardous Waste Collection Day.

Treasure Your Toilet

There are some things that just shouldn't be flushed, whether you have a septic tank or sewer system.



Make sure that you never flush these items, which are often the cause of major clogs and costly repairs:

- Tampons and sanitary napkins
- Disposable diapers
- Wipes (there is no such thing as a flushable wipe)
- Paper towels
- Cat litter
- Cigarette butts

Avoid Garbage Disposals

Septic systems rely on bacteria to break down solids. Garbage disposal waste breaks down a lot slower than other matter that goes down the drain and can overload and harm a septic tank.

For that reason, garbage disposals (or grinders) are prohibited in Sharon. The better solution? Compost your food scraps.

Finally, never pour fats, oil or grease down a drain. These items create clogs which can be very disruptive and expensive to repair.

Conserve Water

Water efficient toilets, showerheads, faucets, clothes washers and dishwashers limit the amount of water that enters a septic system and helps with overall performance.