

Your Septic System: How to Keep It Working



Wastewater from homes not connected to a public sewer system is generally treated "on-site." Most people know these on-site wastewater systems as septic systems.

If you do not maintain your septic system, it is likely to fail. A failed septic system can pollute drinking water, both yours and the entire community's. Once a drinking water supply is polluted, it is very hard to clean up.

There are three major steps that homeowners should take to maintain their septic systems.

1. Have a professional pump out your septic tank every three to five years.

2. Take corrective action when the system begins to back up. Possible causes of septic system failure include:

- Tank needs to be pumped
- Tree roots have grown into trenches
- Pipe has burst
- Trenches are too wet due to large amounts of rainfall

3. Reduce the amount of water used in your home. Some suggestions: Use low-flow devices, detect and repair leaky faucets and toilets, wash larger loads of laundry instead of many small loads, and eliminate other wasteful water use habits.

For More Information

The Purdue Residential Onsite Wastewater Disposal Web site at www.ces.purdue.edu/onsite/ contains a wealth of septic system information to protect your family and the environment. This site provides information about on-site systems, their impacts, and how to design and care for systems that protect the environment. There are special sections for people who already have a septic system and those planning to buy or build a home that requires an on-site system.

The Web site also lists several Purdue Extension publications on proper design, construction, and maintenance of the home septic field, including:

- *Operating and Maintaining the Home Septic System* (ID-142) www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/ID/ID-142.pdf (pdf format) www.agcom.purdue.edu/agcom/pubs/ID/ID-142.html (html format)
- *Septic System Failure* (HENV-1-W) www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/HENV/HENV-1-W.pdf
- *Increasing Septic System Longevity* (HENV-2-W) www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/HENV/HENV-2-W.pdf
- *Water Conservation in the Home* (WQ-34) www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/WQ/WQ-34.pdf (pdf format) www.agcom.purdue.edu/agcom/pubs/WQ/WQ-34.html (html format)

Source: The Purdue Residential Onsite Wastewater Disposal Web site, www.ces.purdue.edu/onsite/maintain.htm

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