

Some System Do's and Don'ts

Thanks to Kingston NH for this material. See the full article at kingstonnh.org.

Some DO's:

- Do conserve water to reduce the amount of wastewater that must be treated and disposed.
- Do only discharge biodegradable wastes into system.
- Do keep your septic tank cover accessible for tank inspections and pumping. Many persons install a concrete riser (or manhole) over the tank, if it is buried six inches or deeper, to provide easy access for inspection and pumping. Don't cover the septic tank or drainfield with asphalt or concrete.
- Do have your septic tank pumped regularly and checked for leaks and cracks. Tanks should be pumped at least once every three years. Keep a schedule and record of past and future inspections and pumping. (Use the chart on the back cover.)
- Do be sure that water from the roof, gutters, and foundation drains do not flow over, or into, the system.
- Do call a septic professional when you have problems.
- Do compost your garbage or put it in the trash, rather than into the septic system.
- Do keep deep rooted trees and bushes away from the leaching system.
- Do restrict use of a garbage grinder/disposal. Waste from garbage grinders will fill your septic tank more rapidly, requiring more frequent pumping, but will also float and increase the scum blanket thickness.

Some DON'T's:

- Don't flush cigarette butts, cotton swabs, cat box litter, sanitary napkins, tampons, disposable diapers, condoms and other non-biodegradable products into your system.
- Don't poison your system by dumping solvents, oils, paints, thinners, disinfectants, pesticides or poisons down the drain which can kill bacteria that help purify sewage and can contaminate groundwater.
- Don't dig into your drainfield or build anything over it.
- Don't plant anything over your drainfield except grass.
- Don't drive over your drainfield or compact the soil in any way.
- Don't empty large quantities of water from items such as hot tubs, or whirlpools, particularly if they are chlorinated.
- Don't put in a separate pipe to carry wash waters to a side ditch or the woods. The graywater contains germs that can spread disease.
- Don't wait for signs of failure.
- Don't attempt to repair a failing system yourself. Hire an experienced septic system contractor. A repair permit may be needed from your local health department.

Some Other System Management and Maintenance Tips:

- Water conservation will extend the life of your system.
- Drainfields do not have unlimited capacity. Drainfields are usually designed for a limited gallonage capacity per bedroom per day. Overloads can occur seasonally or daily.
- Save money. Commercial septic tank additives are not necessary. The bacteria needed for partially decomposing the tank solids are naturally present in sewage. Even if you use additives, you will still need to pump the solids out of your tank.
- When working with septic systems, do so carefully and safely. Sewage contains germs that can cause diseases. Never enter a septic tank. Toxic and explosive gases in the tank present a hazard. Old tanks can collapse. Electric controls present a shock and spark hazard. Secure the septic tank lid so children cannot open it.
- State laws require you get a permit before repairing a failing system. It is important the system is repaired as soon as possible to minimize the health risk to your family and community.