

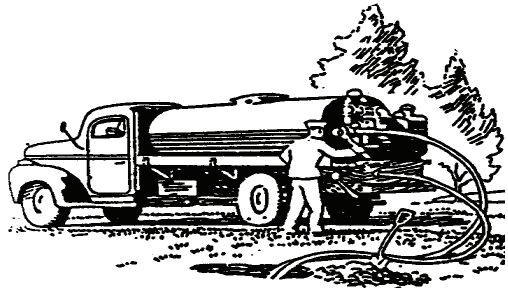
systems as they absorb and transpire water year round. The Health Department does not recommend planting evergreens in or over the absorption area. If this type of shrub is desirable, plant them only at the edges of your system.

Lawn irrigation systems can also damage your absorption area and effect the operation of the system. Law requires that all water lines be at least ten feet away from the septic system. Irrigation systems place an additional water load on the absorption area.

Potential damage caused due to cutting through absorption trenches with sprinkler lines increases the potential for contamination of the drinking water supply. Under no circumstances may a water well, of any type, be located closer than 50 feet to a septic system.

Maintenance

Your septic system should not be “out of sight, out of mind”. Failure to care for this system may cause premature failure and expense. Too often we hear “Oh I haven’t had to pump my tank for 14 years.” The point is when you “have” to pump, the damage has been done and it may be too late. Preventative maintenance by pumping accumulated solids every two to three years may increase the life of the absorption field by preventing soil conditions that may lead to



premature failure and thus prolonging the necessity of replacement. If solids are allowed to accumulate, they may be carried over into the absorption trenches, resulting in clogging of the soil pores possibly causing premature failure. If you have a large system, or any system that incorporates an alternator valve, we suggest that you change your valve to the resting portion of the system annually.

Homeowners should not utilize their systems for disposal of non-biodegradable materials such as grease, cloth, plastic or rubber. Garbage disposals increase the amount of solids that enter your septic tank, and dependent upon use, increase the need to pump the septic tank. The Health Department recommends annual pumping of the septic tank when garbage disposals are routinely used.

Commercially available septic tank additives are not necessary for the proper operation of a household disposal system. *The use of septic additives is not recommended and the use of solvents (ACID) is prohibited.*

Information

Information is available at your local Health Department.

If you need help solving special problems concerning your septic system, call the Elkhart County Health Department, Environmental Health Services Division, at 574-875-3391.

Environmentalists are in the office between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., or can return your call. We welcome your inquires.

Know Your Own Septic System

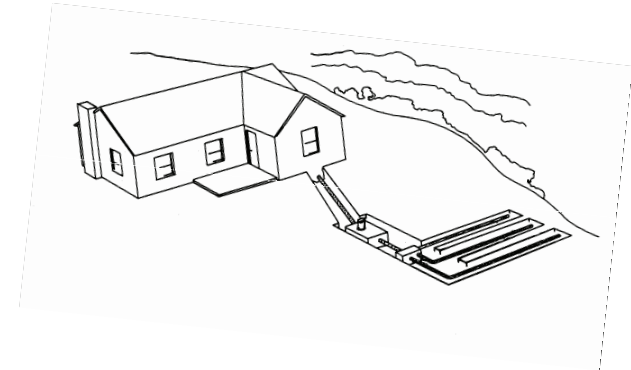
Date installed: _____
 Building permit number: _____
 Name of registered installer: _____
 Septic Tank Size: _____
 Length of trenches: _____
 High water alarm installed yes no
 High water alarm tested _____
 Number of bedrooms in home _____
 Outlet filter installed. yes no
 Date outlet filter serviced. _____

*Septic tanks with outlet filters require more frequent servicing (filter cleaning) to assure proper operation of the filter.

Pumping and Maintenance

Date of Service	Service Company	Phone Number
1. _____		
2. _____		
3. _____		
4. _____		
5. _____		
6. _____		
7. _____		
8. _____		
9. _____		
10. _____		

The Care and Feeding of Onsite Septic Systems



What The Homeowner Should Know About Onsite Wastewater Disposal

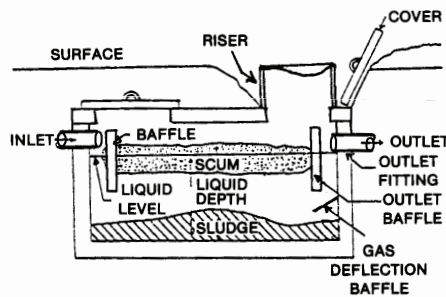
Elkhart County Health Department
 4230 Elkhart Road
 Goshen, IN 46526
 Ph. 574-875-3391

The Homeowner

The homeowner who understands their septic system and its proper care and use, will improve the chances of the system providing many years of trouble free service. Misuse or neglect may cause premature problems, a public health hazard, and unnecessary expense.

What is it?

A private sewage system typically consists of two basic parts: a watertight septic tank for receiving untreated household waste and a sub-surface absorption area of stone filled trenches to dispose of the wastewater. The septic tank allows heavy solids to settle out and decompose slowly and liquefy through bacterial action. The liquid from the septic tank is then distributed underground through a series of trenches consisting of perforated pipes surrounded by stone. This allows distribution of the liquid into the soil where renovation of the waste-water occurs through bacterial action in the soil.



Why the concern?

A failing septic system is both an inconvenience and a costly repair problem. When wastewater is allowed to pool in the yard or is backing into the house, a health hazard exists that increases the potential for disease

transmission. Domestic sewage may contain several diseases such as dysentery, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, and other infectious organisms. Pondered sewage creates a breeding place for mosquitoes and other insects including those responsible for the West Nile Virus. An animal coming in contact with sewage not only is susceptible to certain diseases, but may also transmit the disease to humans. Failing systems, in general, are no longer adequately renovating waste materials, increasing the potential for surface and ground water contamination by bacteria and chemicals or both.

Design Features

Why do I have the system I have?

The septic system must be designed to accept the maximum anticipated wastewater flow. When flow quantities have been established, soil types, depth to seasonal water table, slope of the land, isolation from water supplies and water bodies, such as streams and lakes, must all be factored into the equation. Land with heavy clay soils, seasonally high water tables, flooding conditions, poor drainage, or steep slopes limit the suitability of a site for wastewater disposal. If these conditions are severe, non-conventional septic systems such as pump assisted systems or elevated sand mounds, may be required. Occasionally the site may not be suitable for any type of on-site system.

Minimum Design

Minimum design criteria are established by State Rule and enforced by your Health Department. The State Rule establishes minimum requirements based on site conditions. The Health Department recommends that minimums be considered as a starting point and encourages homeowners to install additional treatment and disposal area to ensure adequate sewage disposal.

Water Usage

The onsite disposal system is based upon maximum anticipated water usage. This is called design daily flow and is expressed in gallons per day.

Practicing water conservation is very important to prolong the life of the absorption system. Prompt repair of leaks and the installation of appliances and fixtures, which use less water, contribute to conservation. A faulty float valve in a toilet tank or a dripping faucet can add hundreds of gallons of excess water over a period of a month causing water usage to exceed the design daily flow and encourage premature failure.

It is also helpful to review usage. For instance, it is beneficial to do laundry over a period of days, rather than all on a single day, to avoid large volumes of water entering the system at one time. Try to only wash full loads to conserve total water usage.

Undesirable Connections

Some water sources should not be connected to your septic system. This includes water from footing drains, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, roof drains, ice machines, drinking water treatment systems, or other clear water wastes. A water softener can also add many gallons of water to the sewage system and may discharge to an alternate location away from the septic system. Laundry waste must be discharged to the septic system and not to the ground surface.

Homeowners should also check their property to assure that rain or surface run-off does not stand or collect in depressions over and around the septic system. If depressions have formed over

absorption trenches, you should consult with a registered installer or Health Department Environmentalist regarding procedures for filling these areas to avoid unnecessary water entry to your absorption area.

Physical Damage

The soil is the single most critical factor in the treatment of sewage. Soils develop over centuries of weathering, but can be damaged in a matter of seconds. Compaction and the resultant loss of soil structure are the greatest problems. Vehicles such as cars and trucks should not be driven over the disposal area because damage to the soil and system piping can occur leading to premature failure and needless repair expense.



Blacktop, concrete, outbuildings, swimming pools, and other structures built or placed over the system interfere with or prevent system operation and make repair difficult. All such construction must be avoided to prolong system operation. Water loving trees and shrubs are a common source of problems. Their roots may block distribution lines so that portions of the system are removed from use causing failure of the system. Evergreen shrubs, having a tap root, may actually be beneficial to on-site