

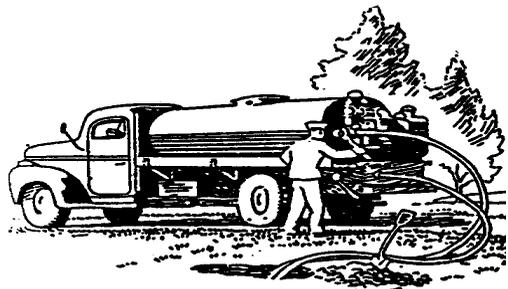
treatment systems as they absorb and transpire water year round. The Health Department does not recommend planting evergreens in or over the absorption area. If this type of shrub is desirable, plant them only at the edges of your system. Keep the dripline of the mature plant at least five (5) feet from system components

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 may be caused through disruption of absorption trenches with the installation of sprinkler lines This also increases the potential for contamination of groundwater. 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 three to five 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 alternating valve, we suggest that you switch your valve to the resting portion of the system annually.

Homeowners should not utilize their systems for disposal of large amounts of anti-bacterial agents or non-biodegradable materials such as grease, cloth, plastic or rubber. *Antibacterial soaps should be used in moderation. Chlorine bleach is an acceptable substitute as a sanitizer.* Garbage disposals increase the amount of solids that enter your septic tank, and depending 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 an onsite wastewater treatment system and may even be harmful. *The use of septic additives is not recommended and the use of solvents or acid is prohibited.. Do not dispose of unused or unwanted pharmaceuticals into your septic system.*

Information

Information is available at your local Health Department or visit our website www.elkhartcountyhealth.org.

If you need help solving special problems concerning your septic system, call the Elkhart County Health Department, Environmental Health Services Division at 574-971-4600.

Environmentalists are in the office between 8 and 10 a.m., or you can leave a voice message so they can return your call. We welcome your inquiries.

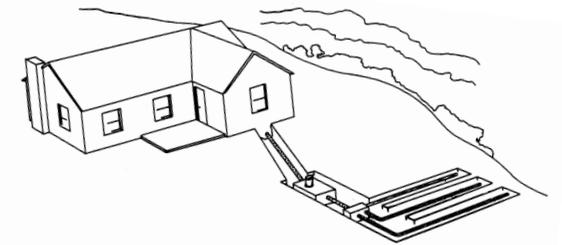
Know Your Own Septic System

System installation drawing: yes no
 Septic Permit Number: _____
 Date installed: _____
 Building permit number: _____
 Name of registered installer: _____
 Septic Tank Size: _____
 Dosing Chamber Size: _____
 Length of trenches: _____
 High water alarm installed: _____
 High water alarm tested: yes no
 Number of bedrooms in home: _____
 *Outlet filter installed: yes no
 *Date outlet filter serviced: _____
 **ATU or Secondary Treatment
 Device installed: yes no
 *Septic tanks with outlet filters require more frequent servicing (filter cleaning) to assure proper operation of the filter.
 **ATU or Secondary Treatment devices require an operation/maintenance contract for the life of the system.

Pumping and Maintenance Record

Date of Service	Service Company	Phone Number
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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The Care and Feeding of Onsite Septic Systems



What The Homeowner Should Know About Onsite Wastewater Treatment

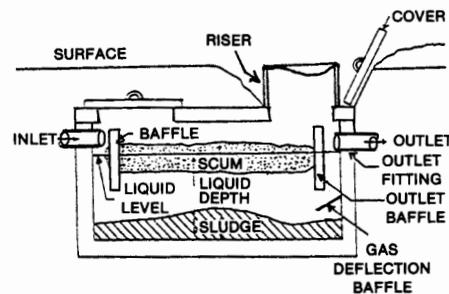
Elkhart County Health Department
 Environmental Health Services
 4230 Elkhart Road
 Goshen, IN 46526
 Phone: 574-971-4600
 Fax: 574-971-4599
 email: envhealth@elkhartcounty.com
www.elkhartcountyhealth.org

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 can cause premature problems, a public health hazard, and unnecessary expense.

What is it?

A private onsite wastewater treatment system typically consists of two basic parts: a watertight septic tank for receiving untreated household waste and a subsurface 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 treatment of the wastewater occurs through bacterial action in the soil.



Why the concern?

A failing septic system is an inconvenience, a nuisance and a costly repair problem. When wastewater is allowed to pool in the yard or is backing up 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. Pooled sewage creates a breeding place for mosquitoes and other insects including those which transmit 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 treating waste materials, increasing the potential for surface and ground water contamination with bacteria and/or chemicals.

Design Features

Why do I have the system I have?

The treatment system must be designed to accept the maximum anticipated wastewater flow from the home. When flow quantities have been established other design features such as soil types, depth to seasonal water table, slope of the land, isolation distances 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 an onsite wastewater treatment system. 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 onsite 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 existing site conditions. The Health Department recommends that minimums be considered as a starting point and encourages homeowners to install additional absorption areas to ensure adequate sewage treatment.

Water Usage

The onsite wastewater treatment 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 prolonging 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 flush 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 onsite wastewater treatment 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 unnecessarily add many gallons of water to the system. Softener discharge may be disposed of in a subsurface location away from the onsite system. Laundry waste must be discharged to the onsite 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 onsite system. If depressions have formed over

absorption field trenches, you should consult with a registered installer or Health Department Environmentalist regarding procedures for filling these areas to avoid unnecessary saturation of your treatment system.

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 treatment area because damage to the soil and system piping can occur leading to premature failure and needless repair expense.



Blacktop, concrete, out-buildings, swimming pools, and other structures built or placed over the treatment area interfere with or prevent system operation and make repair/replacement 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 resulting in premature failure of the system. Evergreen shrubs and plants having a tap root may actually be beneficial to onsite