SEPTIC DO'S & DONT'S

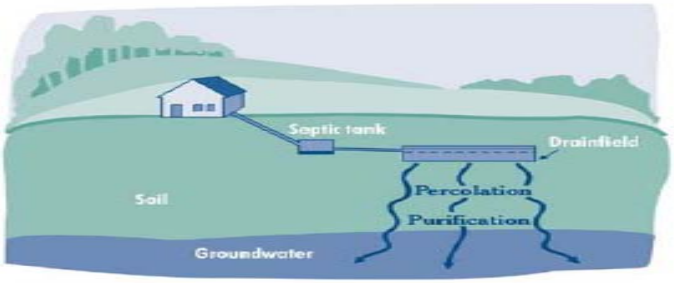
Do:`

- *Learn the location of your septic system, drainfield and reserve area, and keep a sketch of it with maintenance records.*
- *Conserve water to avoid overloading the system; stagger wash load days and repair any leaks.*
- *Divert other sources of water (roof drains, house footing drains, sump pumps) away from system.*
- *Obtain a permit for all repairs and alterations. Call a professional if you experience any signs of septic failure.*
- *Keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumping. Install risers if necessary.*
- *Have your septic tank pumped out regularly by a DEQ licensed contractor.*

Don't:

- *Flush material that will not easily decompose, such as hair, diapers, cigarette butts, matches, or feminine hygiene products.*
- *Drive over the septic tank or drain lines.*
- *Wash or flush medicine or hazardous chemicals like paint, or bleach in to the system.*
- *Plant anything over or near the drain fields except grass. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs may clog and damage drain lines.*
- *Cover the drainfield with hard surface such as concrete or asphalt.*
- *Use septic tank additives. These products usually do not help and some may even be harmful to your system.*
- *Allow backwash from home water softeners to enter the septic system.*
- *Make or allow any repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required permit.*

The most common wastewater treatment system used in rural areas is the septic tank-soil absorption system. The septic tank removes solids from the wastewater, and the soil absorption field (drainfield) filters, treats and disposes of the septic tank effluent.



How Septic Systems Work

The typical septic system contains two major components: a septic tank and a soil drain field.

The septic tank:

- Removes solids, which helps protect the soil drain field from clogging that can result in premature failure of the system.
- Digests a portion of the solids and stores the remaining portion. Up to 50% of the solids that remain in the tank decompose. The remaining 50% accumulates in the bottom of the tank as sludge. When the level of sludge exceeds the tank's holding capacity, the sewage has less time to settle before leaving the tank. Eventually, the sludge level increases enough to allow solids to enter into the drain field, resulting in damage to the field and the need for extensive repairs.

The soil drain field:

- Is located underground in an unsaturated soil area on your property. It further treats the effluent through physical, chemical, and biological processes. The field consists of a series of underground perforated pipes installed in a one-foot deep layer of washed gravel, or a series of plastic chamber units. Here, the effluent is distributed, stored and ultimately applied to the soils for treatment. After filtering through the soil, the effluent enters the groundwater level for final disposal.

Property Owners Onsite Septic System Informational Guide

Department of Planning & Development

Kimberlee Aldrich
Registered Environmental Health Spec. T.
Phone: 503-434-7516
Fax: 503-434-7544
TTY 800-735-2900
525 NE Fourth Street, McMinnville, OR. 97128
E-mail: aldrichk@co.yamhill.or.us
Web address: http://www.co.yamhill.or.us/plan/

What you should know about septic systems

Before You Buy

Before you buy undeveloped property, ask if the property has been evaluated for a septic system. If not, have the Yamhill County Sanitarian evaluate the land for septic system suitability before the purchase takes place.

When checking an existing septic system in a home you might want to buy, Yamhill County advises that you to have the Counties qualified inspector check out the system. Here are the main things to investigate:

- Is the system legal? Was it installed with a permit?
- Is the system the proper size to accommodate the needs of your family or business?
- How old is the system and has it been properly maintained?
- When was the septic tank last pumped?
- Have there been any problems in the past?
- Are all plumbing fixtures connected to the septic tank?
- How many people previously lived in the house?
- Are there signs of septic system failure?

Procedures & Criteria

Why are permits required?

The permitting process ensures that septic systems are sited and constructed so that human health and the environment are protected. Systems installed without permits can affect all neighboring wells and the surface waters on & and around the property.

What permit do I need?

A Construction-Installation Permit is usually what is needed to install a septic system for a single-family dwelling or a system that has a projected sewage flow of less than 2,500 gallons per day. This permit is valid for 1 year. For an additional fee it may be renewed or reinstated if it takes longer to complete construction and installation.

What is the permitting process?

There are two steps involved. Step1is the Site Evaluation. A Site Evaluation must be done to determine which type and size of system is suitable for your property. Getting the permit is Step 2. With a favorable Site Evaluation in hand, you may apply for the permit which must be obtained before installation of a septic system can begin.

What are the permitting fees?

Each step of the process has separate applications and fees that are determined by the type of system, and the amount of proposed sewage flow. To obtain specific fee information for a particular application, please call Yamhill County (503) 434-7516

The Importance of Maintaining your Septic System

The owner of an onsite septic system is responsible for properly operating, monitoring, and maintaining the system to minimize the risk of failure. To accomplish this, the owner should have the system inspected by the county's certified sanitarian. The sanitarian will determine if all components of the system are working properly - pumps, filter, floats, pressure lines, tank and drain field.

The performance and life span of your septic system is directly dependant on how the system is operated and maintained. With proper care, a typical system should operate relatively trouble free for between twenty and thirty years. The list of dos and don'ts on the following page are vital to the long-term, efficient performance of your onsite septic system.

Failing sewage systems are expensive to repair or replace. It typically costs between $3,000 to $15,000 or more to replace a failing system with a new, on-site sewage system.

What to look for in a failing septic system:

* Pools of water or soggy spots, foul odors, and/or dark gray or black soils in the area of your drain field.
* Water that surfaces over the drain field during heavy rain or when doing laundry.
* Sewage backs up into the lowest drains in the house.
* Gurgling of drains, slow drainage (check for clogs first.)
* Soggy soil overlying the drain field.