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**Septic Tank
Program**
New systems and
replacement of old ones

www.lawrencecohealth.com



A septic system is an individual wastewater treatment system using soil to treat small wastewater flows from a home or small group of homes. There are two parts to a conventional system:

- the septic tank
- an absorption or "leach" field

Septic Tank

The septic tank is a watertight container, usually made of concrete, buried underground. The size of the tank is based on the number of bedrooms in your home. The tank is the first stage of wastewater treatment. All the water used in your home is diverted to this underground tank (unless you have a graywater system, that pulls out some of the water). Wastewater is temporarily held in the septic tank while heavy solids settle out. These solids are partially decomposed by bacteria. It is important to pump the tank on a regular basis, to maintain a properly functioning system.

Absorption Field

The absorption field (or leach field) is excavated at the time of the installation, and filled with rock or other porous material. Effluent (the liquid left after the solids have settled out) flows from the septic tank into pipes going throughout the absorption field. These pipes will usually have tiny holes in them to allow the effluent to seep into gravel and then into the soil. This is the second stage in the water treatment process. Nutrients, organic materials, and pollutants in the effluent are held by the soil and digested by soil microbes.

How Often Should I Pump?

Years Between Pumping If Garbage Disposal Present*

Tank Size (Gallons)	Number of People Using Tank			
	1	2	3	4
1000	6 yrs	3 yrs	2 yrs	1.5 yrs
1250	8 yrs	4 yrs	2.5 yrs	2 yrs
1500	10 yrs	5 yrs	3 yrs	2 yrs
2000	13 yrs	6 yrs	4 yrs	3 yrs
2500	16 yrs	8 yrs	5 yrs	4 yrs

* If garbage disposal is not present, time between pumping can be increased by 50%.
Data from Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension.



Maintenance

Pump your tank using the recommended pumping schedule. The costs for inspection and pumping are \$100 to \$250 as compared to \$3,500 to \$12,000 for a new system.

Control the amount of water discharged into your system:

Extend your absorption field's by controlling the amount of water it must absorb and treat

- divert runoff
- conserve indoor water
- repair leaks
- do not water the grass over your leach field
- extend indoor washing throughout the week

Do NOT allow the entry of these materials into your septic system:

- strong toxic chemicals
- latex paint
- water with high suspended solids, such as water used in ceramics studio or sheet rock mud. The solids in this water will not settle out, and will ultimately clog the porous leach field.

- household items such as facial tissues, tampons, cigarette butts, egg shells, bones, cooking grease, etc. They will not decompose in your septic tank and will require pumping more often.

Moderate use of these materials is fine:

- bleach
- drain cleaner
- soaps and detergents

Additives

Additives have not been consistently shown to be effective in either restoring a septic system or decreasing the need for pumping. It is more effective to save the money you might spend on these chemicals and put it towards pumping out the tank.

Signs of Failure

If you smell sewage, or see a sunken, wet spot in your lawn, or a place of lush growth, your septic system may be malfunctioning. Call a professional immediately, as septic system failure is costly, and a new site for a replacement system may not be available on your property.



Your Septic Checklist

Do

- ✓ Do use a certified installer, inspector and pumper. Schedule regular maintenance.
- ✓ Do keep septic tank cover accessible and locked.
- ✓ Do divert down spouts and sump pumps away from lateral lines
- ✓ Do read labels to find low-phosphate detergents
- ✓ Do maintain good grass cover over lateral lines
- ✓ Do have your health department test your well water each year
- ✓ Do repair plumbing leaks and conserve water to extend the life of your sytem.

Don't

- ✗ Don't put grease, solvent, paint, kerosene, gasoline, motor oil, pesticides, chemical drain opener, septic tank additive or cooking fat into drains or toilets
- ✗ Don't dig in, build over or drive on your lateral field
- ✗ Don't allow trees and shrubs nearby (roots clog lateral lines).
- ✗ Don't go down into septic tank (may contain deadly gasses).
- ✗ Don't put any trash except toilet paper in toilet.

New Permit Procedure

1. New and new repair permits are for the construction of new septic systems and the replacement of existing systems
2. A soil evaluation must be performed by a registered Lawrence County soil scientist
3. A site sketch drawing of the proposed system to be drawn by the installer
4. A variance may be obtained on property platted prior to 1-1-96 for setback distances, minimum distance between the infiltrative surface and restrictive feature or bedrock and minimum area of lateral field



5. A completed application, copy of the soil evaluation, variance (if applicable), the permit fee of \$90 is submitted to the Lawrence County Health Department for approval. Fees are non-refundable
6. The system has to be installed by a registered Lawrence County installer or the property owner can install the system after completing the required training
7. The plans are reviewed by the Department for compliance, and once the permit is approved construction can begin
8. A final inspection is conducted before back-filling, and requires a 24-hour advanced notice
9. The property owner may choose to let the installer conduct the whole process