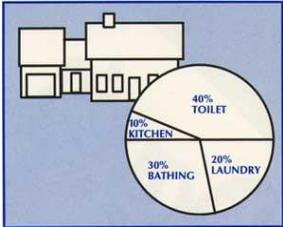


Caring for Your System

Remember that the Homeowner is responsible for the care and maintenance of the septic system! Here are some ideas to keep your system in top shape:

- Inspect the entire system every 1 to 3 years to ensure good working order.
- Pump the solids from the tank every three (3) years to avoid overflowing and failing tanks.
- Keep service and pumping records handy.
- Repair the system as soon as trouble signs appear, such as sluggish toilets, sewer odors, spongy ground around septic tank, or raw sewage backups.
- Conserve water and follow directions to prevent malfunctions.
- Visit the PA Department of Environmental Protection website for more information at <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=554156&mode=2>



Septic System Maintenance Record

Date	Company	Service	Comments

Do's and Don'ts

DO dispose of motor oil at a garage that will recycle it. Never pour oil down the sink or in a storm drain or sewer on the street.

DO limit the use of household chemicals. These substances can reduce the necessary bacteria that breaks down the waste solids. Resulting sludge can clog the drainfield.

DON'T dispose of non-degradable solids in the system. Examples include tissues, sanitary supplies, cigarette butts, and paper towels. A buildup will clog the inlet and effluent pipes.

DO regularly check faucets and toilets for leaks. This extra drainage can overload your system.

DO substitute less toxic substances like baking soda or borax for household hazardous wastes like ammonia and other cleaners. Use a phosphate-free laundry detergent.

DON'T clean paint brushes or dispose of paint into the septic system. Both latex-based and oil-based paint can clog the system and create problems.

For more information

Pennsylvania DEP Factsheet
<http://www.elibrary.dep.state.pa.us/dsweb/Get/Document-77465/3800-FS-DEP1414.pdf>

On-lot System Operation and Maintenance
<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=554156&mode=2>

HOMEOWNER GUIDE

Septic Systems Care and Maintenance



Reading Area Water Authority Source Water Protection Program

For more information

Reading Area Water Authority
 1801 Kutztown Road
 Reading, PA 19604
 (610) 406-6300



What is a Septic System?

Households that are not on a public sewer system use an on-lot septic system to dispose of their wastewater. Household wastewater contains all the wastes from our homes, including toilet use, bathroom and kitchen use, laundry, and other activities. It contains human waste, detergents, chemicals, grease, oils, and many other substances. If not treated properly, these substances can travel through soil and potentially contaminate local waterways.

Most systems have three components:

- **Septic Tank** – Tanks can be constructed from plastic, fiberglass, or concrete. Tank size and specifications are determined by state regulation, and systems are permitted and approved by local agencies.

- **Drainfield** – a drainfield is constructed from a series of perforated pipes buried in gravel-filled trenches in the soil. When wastewater enters the septic tank, an equal amount (known as *effluent*) is forced into the drainfield for treatment.

- **Soil** – the soil encompassing the trenches treats the wastewater by allowing infiltration of the liquids to neutralize most of the pollutants. The effluent eventually is incorporated into groundwater.

Example of Typical Septic System

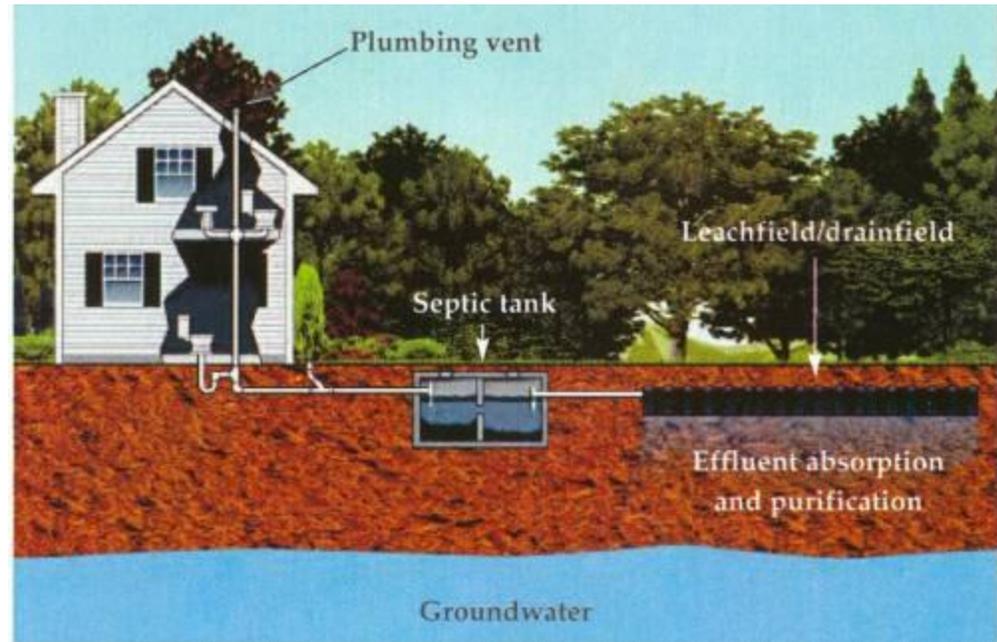


Photo courtesy of Infiltrator Systems, Inc.

Why Should I Maintain My Septic System?

- ***Saves Money!*** Repairing or replacing a septic system can be very expensive. Inspecting and pumping the system every 3 years helps keep the components working correctly.
- ***Protects Your Health!*** Bacteria and viruses are found in the wastewater, and a functional septic system removes most of the organisms during treatment.
- ***Protects the Environment!*** What goes into your septic system may end up in your drinking water source. Refrain from using cleaners and other chemicals that may eventually be discharged from your system and soak into the ground.



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