YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

Want to have a worry free septic system and possibly prolong its life for many more years? Proper maintenance is a key factor to accomplish this. Here are a few items that you can do to keep your system working for many years.

1. Know where your system is located on your property. It is very important that you do not drive on or store heavy items of any kind above the drainfield. Compacted soils may damage the system and items above the drainfield will reduce the evaporation.

2. Conserve water whenever possible. Leaky toilets and/or long showers are often the cause of a failed septic system. Do not let the water run in the winter to keep pipes from freezing as the excess water can flood your system. Also, use low flow shower heads and toilets and try to spread out or even limit your laundry loads.

3. Have a septic pumper routinely clean your septic tank. The average 1,000 gallon tank should be pumped every 5 years to keep solids from building up to a point where they may start entering the drainfield and closing the system (8 years for seasonal homes).

4. Install risers (if needed) to the ground surface to make it easier to access the tank for pumping. It will cost more to have a tank pumped if the pumper has to dig it up each time they come to clean the tank. Risers also serve as a reminder that the tank is out there and needs maintenance.

5. Avoid washing food and grease down a garbage disposal. Garbage disposals can increase the amount of solids in your tank by 50% and are not recommended for use with septic systems. Use sparingly if used, and pump the tank more often.

6. Never put harsh chemicals into your septic system. Many chemicals can kill the bacteria that help break down the solids in your tank. Chemicals such as strong acids, drain cleaners, solvents, or old antibiotics can be harmful to your system. Products with bacteria and/or enzymes are effective, but should not be used in place of septic tank pumping. Normal amounts of bleach, when washing clothes, is acceptable. Consider using liquid laundry soaps as powdered soap can leave sediment in pipes and septic tank.

7. Don’t use your toilet as a trash can. Many items commonly flushed down the toilet may overburden your septic system. Items such as dental floss, diapers, tampons, sanitary napkins, kitty litter, cigarette butts, paper towels, and greasy items should never be put into your septic system.

8. Landscaping can be a benefit to, or can harm, a septic system. Do not plant trees and large bushes close to the drainfield. The roots can clog drain lines and cause failure. Grass above the drainfield can benefit a system by using some of the water you are trying to get rid of. Divert water and plowed snow from drainfield and tank areas. Excess water running onto the drainfield can be a problem to your septic system. It is a good idea to cut the grass in the fall so that it does not collect a lot of snow in the winter. Tall grass will also reduce the amount of evaporation.

Your septic system is not something you should take for granted. A system that has failed is not only a headache, but can be a threat to the health of your family, community, and the environment. Septic systems are also expensive to repair, not to mention the damage to your landscape.