

*...If you are like most homeowners, you probably never give much thought to what happens to what goes down your drain. However, if you rely on an onsite wastewater treatment system (OWTS), what you don't know can hurt you. Proper operation and maintenance of your system can have a significant impact on how well it works and how long it lasts.*

## WHY MAINTAIN YOUR SYSTEM?

There are three main reasons why OWTS maintenance is so important. The first reason is money. The minimal amount of preventative maintenance that systems require costs very little in comparison to the cost of a new system.

The second and most important reason is to protect the health of your family, your community, and the environment. When OWTS systems fail, inadequately treated household wastewater is released into the environment. Any contact with untreated human waste can pose significant health risks, and wastewater can contaminate nearby wells, groundwater, and drinking water supplies.

Finally, the third reason is to protect the economic health of your community. Failed systems can cause property values to decline, and real estate sales to be delayed.

## A QUICK COURSE ON OWTS DESIGN & FUNCTION

In most cases, your onsite treatment system consists of a septic tank, followed by either seepage fields or a sandfilter. The tank is designed to allow for settling and separation of grease and solids. Baffles in the tank prevent these components from entering the rest of the system and eventually clogging the field lines or filter bed.

Seepage field lines consist of 4" perforated plastic pipes underlain with crushed rock, or certain types of "gravel-less pipe". In both cases, the liquid effluent from the septic tank soaks into the ground and is filtered by the underlying soil.

Sandfilters are used in areas where the soil type does not allow for soil absorption. Sandfilters use a specifically sized sand as a filter medium to "clean" the septic tank effluent. Pipes at the bottom of the system collect the treated effluent and it is discharged to an appropriate area.

Several other types of "alternative" systems are used in special cases. If you have one of these, contact the Health Department for more information about your system.

## MAINTENANCE TIPS FOR HOMEOWNERS

- ◆ Have your tank pumped every 3-5 years. This simple routine will prolong the life of your system. This brochure has a maintenance log to keep track of your pumping schedule.
- ◆ Do not allow footing drains, gutters, furnaces, or water softeners to discharge into your wastewater treatment system.
- ◆ Use laundry and cleaning products according to manufacturer's recommendations. Use liquid laundry detergent rather than powdered.
- ◆ **NEVER** dispose of any of these items in your system:
  - Grease
  - Pesticides, insecticides, motor oil
  - Cigarette butts
  - Tampons or sanitary napkins
  - Diapers
  - Condoms
- ◆ Install water saving fixtures.
- ◆ Plan high water use tasks at different times during the day, rather than all at the same time (e.g. showers, laundry, dishwasher).

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# Homeowner's Guide to the Care and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

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## INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE RECORD

FILE # \_\_\_\_\_

Date installed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date pumped: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Pumper: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES**