

INDIVIDUAL SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Septic Information

In most rural areas and in many suburban residential areas, individual sewage treatment systems are relied upon for the disposal of household wastes.

An individual sewage treatment system will serve a home satisfactorily only if it is properly located, designed, constructed and maintained.

Per the NY State Health Code, please contact the Clinton County Health Department for instructions on obtaining a construction permit to install, replace, or if you are re-engineering, a septic system.

System Components

A typical household sewage treatment system consists of a house sewer, septic tank, distribution box and absorption field.

House Sewer - The pipeline connecting the house and drain and the septic tank.

Septic Tank - Untreated liquid household wastes (sewage) will quickly clog your absorption field if not properly treated. The septic tank provides this needed treatment. When sewage enters the septic tank, the heavy solids settle to the bottom of the tank; the lighter solids, fats and greases partially decompose and rise to the surface and form a layer of scum. The solids that have settled to the bottom are attacked by bacteria and form sludge. Septic tanks do not remove bacteria and, therefore, what is discharged cannot be considered safe.

Distribution Box - Serves to distribute the flow from the septic tank evenly to the absorption field or seepage pits. It is important that each trench or pit receive an equal amount of flow. This prevents overloading of one part of the system.

Absorption Field - A system of narrow trenches partially filled with a bed of washed gravel or crushed stone into which perforated or open joint pipe is placed. The discharge from the septic tank is distributed through these pipes into the trenches and surrounding soil. The subsurface absorption field must be properly sized and constructed to assure satisfactory operation and a long life.

Operation and Maintenance

The contents of the septic tank should be pumped every two to three years or when the total depth of sludge and scum exceeds one-third of the liquid depth of the tank. If the tank is not cleaned periodically, the solids are carried into the absorption field; rapid clogging occurs; premature failure follows; and finally, the absorption field must be replaced. Pumping your septic tank is less expensive than replacing your absorption field.

Caution

- > Avoid entering your septic tank.
- > Individuals have died from gas asphyxiation.
- > Never permit heavy equipment to pass over the absorption field.

Detergents, kitchen wastes, laundry wastes and household chemicals in normal amounts do not affect the proper operation of household sewage treatment systems. However, excessive quantities can be harmful.

Avoid the disposal of cigarette butts, disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, plastics, trash, etc., into your household sewage system. These items are not readily decomposed.

Septic tank additives are not recommended. Additives are unnecessary to the proper operation of household systems and may cause the sludge and scum in the septic tank to be discharged into the absorption field, resulting in premature failure. Some additives may actually pollute groundwater.

Garbage grinders substantially increase the accumulation of solids in the septic tank, as well as the solids entering the absorption fields and pits. Their disadvantages outweigh the convenience they provide and are not recommended for households with their own sewage treatment systems. If used, the septic tank size should be increased.

Contact Us

To receive more information, or to schedule an appointment for a construction permit, call or visit us at:

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Environmental Unit
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