



Clean Water begins at home!

Septic System Maintenance

Failure of a septic system can cause serious problems. Sewage can accumulate on the ground near the drainfield or back up into buildings. Animals and people may become ill from contact with these discharges. Pollution from failing septic systems can contaminate ditches, creeks, and shallow drinking water supplies. In addition to public health concerns, it is costly to repair or replace the system.

Here are some guidelines to consider:

- Know the location of your septic tank, drainfield, and well. For assistance, call Clark County Public Health at (360) 397-8428.
- Check for signs of septic failure, such as sewage backup in drains and toilets; slow-flushing toilets, sinks, or drains; visible liquid on the surface of the ground near the septic system; lush green grass over the drainfield, even during the dry weather; building up of aquatic weeds or algae in lakes or ponds adjacent to your home; unpleasant odors around your house.
- Have your septic tank inspected and pumped by a licensed operator every one to three years, depending on the complexity of the system. Have your septic system inspected within one year of purchasing a new home.



- Divert other sources of water, such as roof drains, house footing drains, and sump pumps to lawn areas away from the septic system. Excessive water floods the system, keeping the soil in the drainfield saturated and unable to adequately treat the wastewater.
- Limit water entering the septic tank by using water-saving faucets, showers, and toilets; spreading clothes washing over the week; minimizing the amount of water used for bathing and dish washing, and fixing leaking faucets and toilets.
- Don't drive over or park on a drainfield.
- Don't plant trees or shrubs on a drainfield.
- Don't cover a drainfield with a hard surface such as concrete, asphalt, above-ground pools, or decks. The area should have only a grass cover.
- Don't overuse a kitchen garbage disposal. Solids can overload the system. Non-meat kitchen scraps can also be composted.
- Don't use commercial septic additives. These products usually do not help significantly, and may harm your system.
- Don't use your toilet as a trash can. Never flush coffee grounds, fat, grease, or oil, condoms, kitty litter, paper towels, sanitary napkins/tampons, dental floss, disposable diapers, cigarette butts, or hazardous chemicals down the drain. These items can overtax or destroy the biological digestion taking place within your system.



Call the Clark County Public Health at (360) 397-8428 for additional information about maintaining your septic system.



For more information, please call the Clark County Clean Water Program at (360) 397-6118 ext. 4345 or visit www.clark.wa.gov/water-resources.



For other formats, contact the Clark County ADA Office: **Voice** (360) 397-2000; **Relay** 711 or (800) 833-6388; **Fax** (360) 397-6165; **E-mail** ADA@clark.wa.gov.