

Septic System Do's and Don'ts

- DO** learn the location of your septic tank and drainfield. Keep a sketch of it handy with your maintenance record for service visits.
- DO** have your septic system inspected annually.
- DO** have your septic tank pumped out by a licensed contractor, approximately every three to five years, or as often as is appropriate for your system.
- DO** keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumping. Install risers if necessary.
- DO** call a professional whenever you experience problems with your system, or if there are any signs of system failure.
- DO** keep a detailed record of repairs, pumping, inspections, permits issued, and other maintenance activities.
- DO** conserve water to avoid overloading the system. Be sure to repair any leaky faucets or toilets.
- DO** divert other sources of water, like roof drains, house footing drains, and sump pumps, away from the septic system. Excessive water keeps the soil in the drainfield from naturally cleansing the wastewater.

- DON'T** go down into a septic tank. Toxic gases are produced by the natural treatment processes in septic tanks and can kill in minutes. Extreme care should be taken when inspecting a septic tank, even when just looking in.
- DON'T** allow anyone to drive or park over any part of the system.
- DON'T** plant anything over or near the drainfield except grass. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs may clog and damage the drain lines.
- DON'T** dig in your drainfield or build anything over it, and don't cover the drainfield with hard surface such as concrete or asphalt. The area over the drainfield should have only a grass cover. The grass will not only prevent erosion, but will help remove excess of water.

- DON'T** make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required health department permit. Use professional licensed onsite contractors when needed.
- DON'T** use septic tank additives. Under normal operating condition, these products usually do not help and some may even be harmful to your system.
- DON'T** use your toilet as a trash can or poison your septic system and the groundwater by pouring harmful chemicals and cleanser down the drain. Harsh chemicals can kill the beneficial bacteria that treat your wastewater.
- DON'T** use a garbage disposal without checking with your local regulatory agency to make sure that your septic system can accommodate this additional waste.
- DON'T** allow backwash from home water or softeners to enter the septic system.
- DON'T** use fabric softeners with your laundry.

Bathrooms

In a typical household, most of the water used indoors is used in the bathroom, and there are several little things that can be done to conserve water there. For example, try to avoid letting water run while washing hands and brushing teeth. Avoid taking long showers and install water saving features in faucets and shower heads. These devices can reduce water use by up to 50 percent. Low-flush toilets use 1.6 gallons per flush compared to the three to five gallons used by conventional toilets. Even using a toilet dam or putting a container filled with rocks in the toilet tank can reduce water use by 25 percent.

It is also important to avoid over taxing your system by using a lot of water in a short time period, or by allowing too much outside water to reach the drainfield. Try to space out activities requiring heavy water use over several days. Also, divert roof drains surface water, and sump pumps away from the drainfield.