



Did you know?

Septic systems are vital in the treatment of various contaminants, especially Escherichia coli (E. coli). E. coli is a species of bacteria that is naturally found in the intestines of humans and warm-blooded animals. However, some types can cause illness in humans, including diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, and sometimes vomiting.

A proper functioning septic system protects groundwater and surface water from fecal contamination. Presence of E.coli in water is an indication of contamination.

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Septic Systems

As summer approaches our thoughts naturally turn to, septic systems.

If you live on Moira Lake, you likely have a septic system. Septic systems are onsite wastewater treatment units that fulfill the role of municipal sewers in rural areas. Anything that goes down the drain — every shower drip and every toilet flush — flows to the septic system. Septic systems, generally speaking, are comprised of a tank, a network of pipes and billions of organisms that process your waste.

A properly functioning septic system will remove most contaminants to acceptable levels. However, treated wastewater that percolates through the soil may still contain some contaminants that can enter the groundwater table.

Recent studies have shown that:

- 42% of systems less than 5 years old had issues.
- 60% of systems 5 – 10 years old had issues.
- Systems of all ages require maintenance.



Signs of Problems

- Sewage backup in drains or toilets
- Slow flushing toilets, sinks or drains
- Visible liquid on the surface of the ground near the septic system. It may or may not have an odor associated with it.
- Lush green grass over the drain field, even during dry weather, often indicates that an excessive amount of liquid from the system is moving up through the soil instead of downward. While some upward movement of liquid from the drain field is good, too much could indicate major problems.
- Build-up of aquatic weeds or algae in lakes or ponds adjacent to your home. This may indicate that nutrient-rich septic system waste is leaching into the surface of the water.

When properly designed, constructed and maintained, a septic system should provide long-term, effective treatment of your household wastewater.

Septic Systems

Do

- familiarize yourself with the location of your system
- keep the tank access lid secured to the riser at all times
- keep an as-built system diagram in a safe place for reference
- keep accurate records of septic system maintenance and service calls
- test your well water at least three times a year — spring, summer and fall — for indicator bacteria
- have your tank inspected for sludge and scum buildup on a regular basis (3-5 years) and clean out when a third of the depth of your tank is full of sludge and scum
- have your effluent filter checked and cleaned every year; if you don't have an effluent filter, consider adding one
- divert surface water away from your distribution system
- conserve water in the house to reduce the amount of wastewater that must be treated
- repair leaky plumbing fixtures
- replace inefficient toilets with low flush models
- consider installing a lint filter on your washing machine's discharge pipe
- spread the number of loads of laundry throughout the week

Don't

- enter a tank — gases and lack of oxygen can be fatal
- put cooking oils or food waste down the drain
- flush hazardous chemicals, pharmaceuticals, cigarette butts or sanitary products
- use a garbage disposal unit/garburator unless your system has been designed for it
- use special additives that are claimed to enhance the performance of your tank or system — you don't need them!
- dig without knowing the location of your distribution system
- drive or park over your tank or distribution system
- pave over your distribution system
- allow livestock on the distribution system
- plant trees or shrubs too close to the septic tank or distribution system
- connect rain gutters, storm drains, sump pumps or allow surface water to drain into a septic system
- discharge water softener backwash to the septic system unless your system has been designed for it
- drain hot tub and spa water to the septic system

A licensed sewage hauler should inspect the system every three to five years, and pump out the solids and scum.