

What About Additives?

Enough bacteria are present in your septic system from normal bodily wastes.

There are many disadvantages to using additives in your septic system including

- These chemicals can interfere with biological action in your septic tank.
- Some chemicals can flush sludge and scum into your drain field causing it to clog.
- Groundwater can become contaminated from some chemicals.
- Additives may increase the solid material in your septic tank by producing inert ingredients.
- Cost.

There is no substitute for pumping!

Tips to Keep Your Septic System Working Well

- Don't water the leach field
- Don't flood the system with excessive water use
- Keep excess solids out of the system and avoid flushing toxins down the drain
- Avoid using your garbage disposal to process large quantities of wastes
- Regularly pump out the septic tank and inspect the physical components of the system
- Don't park or drive over the leach field
- Don't plant trees or large shrubs over the leach field

New to Your Home?

- Obtain all septic records
- Determine location of your leach field
- Have the system inspected if information is unavailable
- Pump your septic tank

Keep copies of ALL septic system maintenance. Contact USU Water Quality Extension at (435) 797-2580 to obtain a Septic System Records folder.

For more information on:

- Finding someone to service your septic system
- Inspecting your current septic system
- Building a new septic system

Contact USU Extension's water quality program (435-797-2580) or visit our web page:

www.extension.usu.edu/waterquality

Based on material developed by Susan Donaldson, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.



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Managing Your Septic System

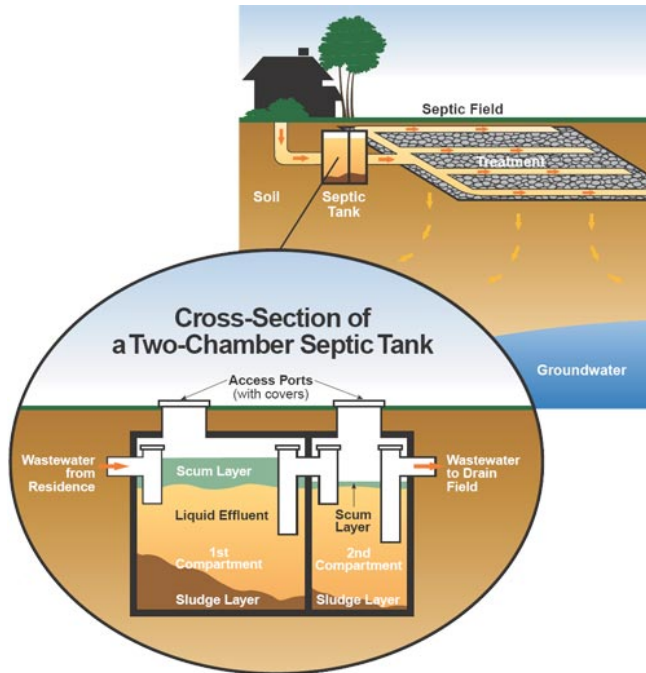
Rural properties rely on self-contained sewage treatment systems installed below ground near the properties they serve. Such systems are called septic tank-soil absorption systems, otherwise known as "septic systems".



Water is Life: Quality Matters

Components of a Septic System

Wastes from the house pass through the house main drain, or sewer line, into the septic tank. The purpose of the tank is to allow settling and bacterial breakdown to occur. As microorganisms digest the organic solids, they sink to the bottom. Gases such as methane are generated and together with soils, grease, and soap suds, form a scum over the surface of the liquid.



Through bacterial action, some of the solids are digested and converted to liquid for discharge into a “soil absorption area” or leach field. The remaining solids are stored for future disposal.

Prevent Septic System Failure

Keep your bacteria healthy and happy

Bacteria must be present in the septic tank to digest the organic solids. Normal household waste provides enough bacteria to digest the solids UNLESS the bacteria are killed off.

Avoid products with the following warnings on the labels:

- “Harmful if swallowed”
- “Avoid contact with the skin”
- “Do not get in open cuts or sores”
- “If product comes in contact with eyes, call physician immediately”

Reduce Water Use

Conserve water in your home and save your septic system!

- Install low flow fixtures
- Check for and fix leaks
- Do only full loads of laundry at off-peak times
- Try to limit the number of laundry loads done daily

Reduce Solids in Tank that Cannot be Digested

The material that cannot be digested, such as pieces of sand, plastic, etc. will remain in the tank and eventually must be removed by pumping.

Pump Tank to Prevent Overflow or Backflow

Tank Size (gallons)	1000	1250	1500
Number of people in household	Suggested pumping interval (years)		
1	12	16	19
2	6	8	9
3	4	5	6
4	3	3	4
5	2	3	3
6	2	2	3

To pump ... or not to pump Which would you choose?

- Pumping costs about \$200 for the average 1250-gallon tank
- A new leach field costs from \$5,000 to as much as \$20,000

Other Causes of Septic Failure

- Placement in poor drainage area
- Driving over the drain field
- Pouring kitchen grease into drains
- Failure to install according to septic codes
- Flushing cigarette butts, sanitary napkins, or other inorganic materials down the toilet
- Extensive use of garbage disposals
- Tree roots clogging pipes—contact a septic contractor for repairs
- Use of salts and chemicals from water softeners and washing machines