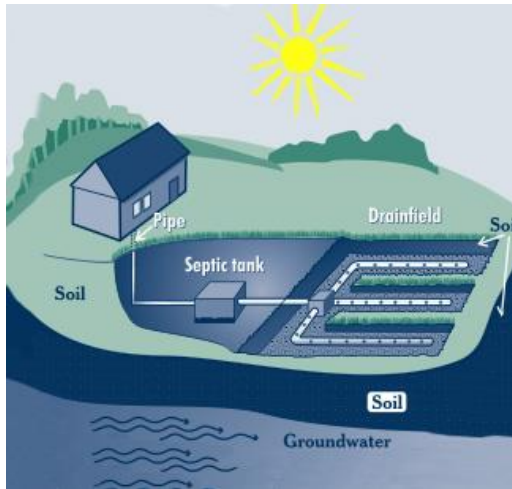


What is a Septic System?

Septic systems are individual treatment systems that use the soil to treat small wastewater flows, usually from single homes. They are typically used on large lots or in rural areas that lack centralized wastewater treatment facilities.



Systems consist of four major components: a pipe from the home, a septic tank, an absorption field, and the soil. Household wastewater is temporarily held in the septic tank where the heavy solids and lighter scum are allowed to separate from the wastewater. This separation process is known as primary treatment. The solids stored in the tank are decomposed by bacteria and later removed along with the lighter scum by a septic system professional. From there liquids move out into the absorption field where microbes in the soil digest or remove most contaminants from the wastewater before it reaches the groundwater.

Is Your Septic System Failing?

There are several indicators that your septic system may not be functioning properly. If you discover any of the symptoms below, it may be wise to get a septic system inspection.

- Slow draining sinks and toilets
- Plumbing backups
- Sewage odors (both inside and outside the house)
- Wet or mushy ground above the absorption field
- Greener or faster growing grass above the absorption field
- Presence of bacteria in nearby streams or wells

What does an Inspection Include?

- Locating the system
- Uncovering access holes
- Flushing the toilets
- Checking for signs of back ups
- Measuring scum and sludge layers
- Identifying any leaks
- Inspecting mechanical components
- Pumping the tank if necessary

In general, you should have a typical septic system inspected every three years by a professional, and have your tank pumped as recommended.

Septic System Maintenance Guide for Homeowners



Marshall County

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Septic System Care and Maintenance

It is vital that septic systems receive the proper care and maintenance. Neglect or abuse can lead to system failure. Failing septic systems can:

- Be a health threat to your neighbors and family
- Be harmful for the environment, especially lakes, streams and ground water resources
- Lower property values
- Negatively affect other public water supplies
- Be very expensive to repair or replace

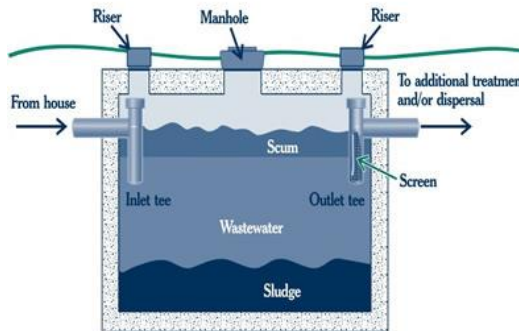
Tips to Avoid Trouble

DO have your septic system inspected every three years by a licensed professional and pumped as often as recommended.

DO keep a record of pumping, inspections, and any other maintenance done to the system along with the date that the action occurred.

DO practice water conservation. The efficient use of water can improve the operation of the septic system and reduce risk of failure. Repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets, run washing machines and dishwashers only when you have a full load, and use water saving faucets, showerheads, and toilets.

DO learn the location of your septic system components and drainfield. Keep a sketch handy for service visits and for new owners should you decide to sell the property. Should your system have a flow diversion valve (for systems that divide the leach field into two distinct areas), turn it once a year. Flow diverters can add many years to the life of your system.



Typical Septic Tank Design

DO divert roof drains and surface water flows away from your leach field. Keep sump pumps and house footing drains away from this area as well.

DO take any hazardous household chemicals and other hazardous waste to an approved hazardous waste collection system. These can be harmful to your septic system.

DON'T allow anyone to drive or park cars or other heavy equipment over any part of your septic system. The area should be kept undisturbed with a mowed grass cover.

DON'T use commercial septic tank additives. These products usually don't work and have potential to harm your system.

DON'T use your toilet for a trash can. Also, don't poison your system by pouring harmful chemicals down the drain. They can harm the beneficial bacteria in the tank and leach field that treat your waste.

Partnering With:

St. Joseph County SWCD
Kosciusko County SWCD
Purdue Extension
Indiana NRCS
Indiana Department of Environmental Management

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Special Thanks:

To the Salamonie River Watershed
Partners for the use of this brochure.

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