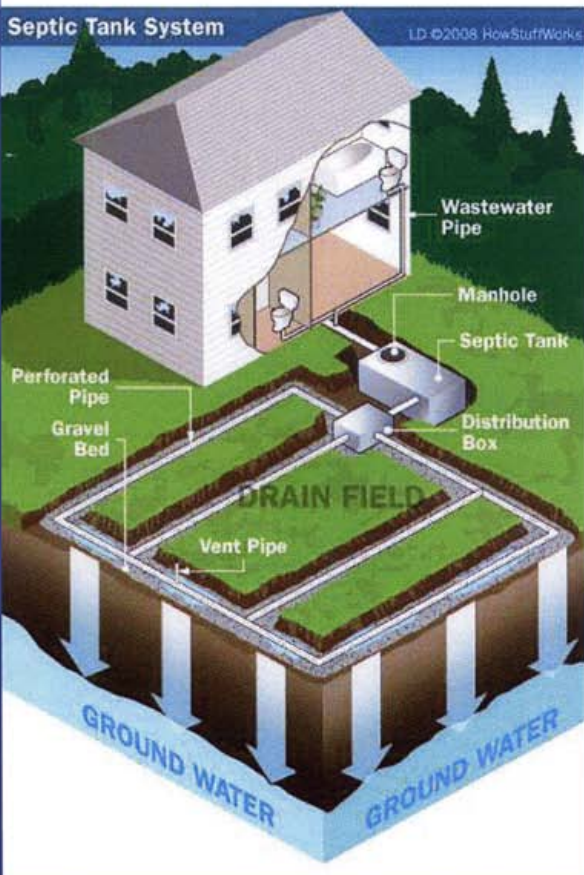


Important News About

Home Sewage Treatment System Operation and Maintenance

Septic Tank System

LD ©2008 HowStuffWorks



Your Septic System is Your Responsibility

- Regulations related to home sewage treatment systems (HSTS) have changed. Such systems will now require an operation and maintenance permit for the life of the HSTS. If your HSTS is close to an existing municipal sanitary sewer line, you may be required to tap in to it.
- A HSTS that is working properly **will effectively treat and dispose of** the sewage and wastewater generated during everyday activities.
- Failed HSTS release excess nutrients and bacteria into waterways. Nutrients contribute to the growth of algae in ditches, creeks, and Lake Erie. **Harmful algal blooms can lead to unsafe drinking water** in communities that take their water from the lake. **Bacteria can cause disease.**

When Will I Need a Permit?

A permit is required before any new sewage system is installed. A permit will also be required anytime that you substantially alter or replace your existing sewage system. Minor repairs on your sewage system do not require a permit. If you are unsure whether you need a permit, contact your local county health department.

How do I Get a Permit?

An application for a permit can be found at your local county health department or on the health department website. Prior to completing an application, check with your health department to see what other steps may be required. For example, most health departments require that you have the soil tested and the site evaluated before a permit can be approved. The cost of permits and fees can vary from county to county and change from year to year. Contact your county health department website for the most up-to-date information regarding the application and cost.

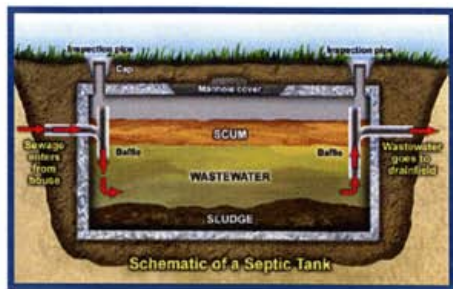
How do I Know if I Have a Home Sewage Treatment System?

How do I Find it?

- First, determine if you are connected to sanitary sewers. If you are connected to sanitary sewers, you do not have a HSTS on your property.
- If you DO have a HSTS but you do not know where it is, start by investigating where the plumbing exits the home. Outside, you should be able to locate the septic tank. Look for a concrete or hard plastic lid protruding from the ground. Sometimes these lids get covered by soil and are hard to find.
- If you are still unsure where your HSTS is located or what type of system you have, contact your County Health Department. They will probably have records of your HSTS which indicate location and type of system. They can find your system, tell you if it's operating correctly, and connect you with service providers who can clean and service it.

Know Your Home Sewage Treatment System

Homes or businesses that are not connected to sanitary sewers treat waste with a system that is contained on the property. A functional sewage treatment system, or septic system, safely removes contaminants such as bacteria and chemicals from wastewater.



There are several types of home sewage treatment systems. The most common in our region are:

Soil: There are no mechanical parts. Your system relies on gravity and water pressure.

Aerator: you have multiple tanks and a pump that aerates liquids in your system.

NPDES: Because your system discharges off your property, you already have a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

Mechanical/mound: You have a lift station with mechanical parts.

These elements are common to all systems:

Part One: Septic Tank

- Plumbing pipes carry gray water (soapy water from showers and sinks) and black water (waste from toilets) from the house to the sewer line and into the septic tank.
- Bacteria within the septic tank break down sewage and waste.
- Heavy material forms a sludge layer at the bottom. Light material floats toward the top to form a scum layer. Mostly liquid material is between these layers. Each time sewage enters the tank, an equal amount of this liquid (effluent) flows out of the tank and into the leach field.
- The sludge layer needs to be cleaned out regularly to keep the system working safely.

Part Two: Drain Field or Leach Field

- Leaching pipes allow the effluent to flow out of the septic tank and into the soil, where it is naturally filtered and treated.
- The leach field will safely manage effluent for 25 years or more. You will need to identify an additional area of your property for a replacement field if you plan to keep using a septic system.

Maintaining Your Sewage Treatment System

With good soil conditions and regular maintenance, home sewage treatment systems can last up to 25 years. With regular pumping of the tank, the life of the system may be extended.

DO

- Have the sewage tank pumped out regularly by a registered septic hauler to remove solids. Your service provider or the county health department can tell how often your tank should be emptied.
- Flush ONLY waste and toilet paper.
- Limit the amount of water going into your system.
- Direct surface water from downspouts away from the leach field.

DO NOT

- Do not drive over or park vehicles on any part of your septic system or leach field.
- Do not build on or dig into your leach field or replacement area.
- Do not use a garbage disposal if you have a septic tank. It will fill the tank with solids much faster.
- Do not plant trees and shrubs over the sewage treatment area. Roots can cause damage.
- Do not use septic tank additives; they may actually harm your system.
- Do not flush anything down the system except waste and toilet paper. Do not drain grease or oil, or dispose of cat litter, cigarette butts, feminine hygiene items, paper towels, baby wipes, paint, or chemicals.



Resources

This brochure was prepared by the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) with funding from member local governments and financed in part by grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, through the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency under section 604(b) of the Clean Water Act.

Lucas County Health Department

Phone: 419.213.4100

Email: binghamj@co.lucas.oh.us
(Jerry Bingham)

Website: www.lucascountyhealth.com

Ottawa County Health Department

Phone: 419.734.6800

Fax: 419.734.6888

Email: ochdeh@cros.net (Ken Sharkey)

Website: www.ottawahealth.org/

Wood County Health District

Phone: 419-352-8402

Fax: 419-353-9680

Email: lglore@co.wood.oh.us (Lana Glore)

Website: woodcountyhealth.org

