

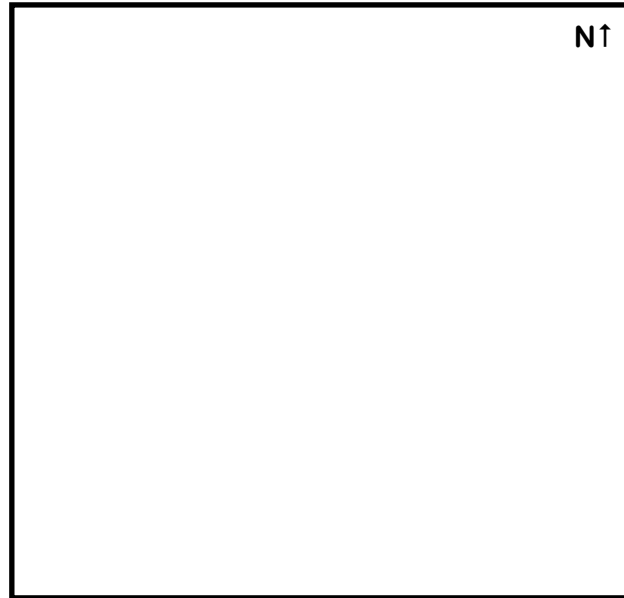
DO:

- ◆ Learn the location of your septic system, drainfield and reserve area, and keep a sketch of it with the maintenance records.
- ◆ Have your septic tank inspected by a certified O & M specialist as required per CCC 24.17.
- ◆ Keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumping. Install risers if necessary.
- ◆ Keep detailed records of repairs, pumpings, inspections, permits, and other maintenance activities.
- ◆ Conserve water to avoid overloading the system; stagger wash load days and repair any leaks.
- ◆ Divert other sources of water (roof drains, house footing drains, sump pumps) away from system.
- ◆ Contact a professional when you experience problems with your system.
- ◆ Obtain a permit from Clark County Public Health (397-8428) for all repairs and alterations.
- ◆ Use household cleaners in moderation and follow directions on labels.

DON'T:

- ◆ Don't enter a septic tank; toxic gases are produced in the tank that can be deadly within minutes.
- ◆ Don't drive, park, or do any activity that will compact the soil on top of the system.
- ◆ Don't plant anything over or near the drainfield except grass. Roots can damage the drain lines, and trees may shade the drainfield. Excessive irrigation over or near the system may also cause damage.
- ◆ Don't dig into the drainfield or cover it with any hard surface or building.
- ◆ Don't repair your system without a required permit from Clark County Public Health (397-8428).
- ◆ Don't use septic tank additives.
- ◆ Don't use your system as a trash can for grease, coffee grinds, cigarette butts, diapers, sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms, paper towels, plastics, cat litter, latex paints, pesticides, any hazardous chemical, or other non-biodegradable substance.

Sketch of Onsite Septic System



SYSTEM INSPECTION RECORD

DATE	COST	CONTRACTOR	DESCRIPTION OF WORK



CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
 1601 East Fourth Plain Blvd. ♦ PO Box 9825
 Vancouver, WA 98666-8825
 Phone: (360) 397-8428

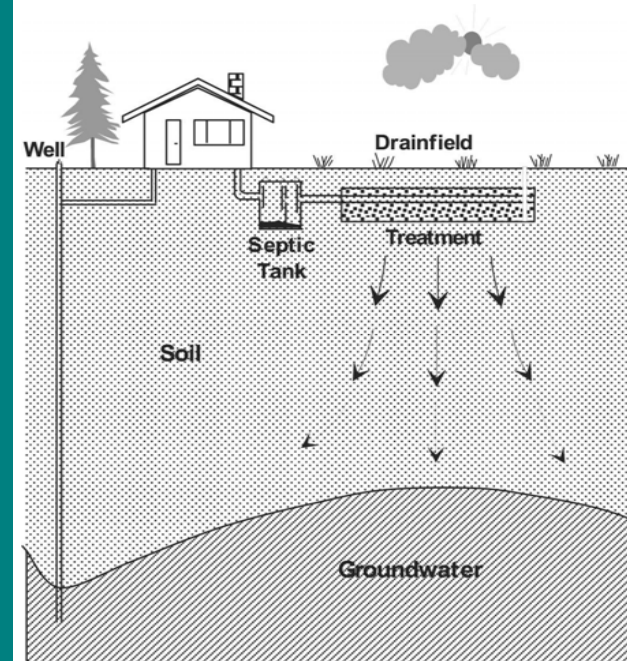


For an alternative format, contact the Clark County ADA Compliance Office. Voice (360)397-2025; TTY (360)397-2445; E-mail ADA@clark.wa.gov

Revised 01/10

ON-SITE SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

A Guide to the Proper Care and Maintenance of Your Onsite Septic System



CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Onsite Septic Systems (OSS)

Almost 25% of US homes dispose of domestic wastewater through onsite septic systems (OSS). These systems account for the most common wastewater treatment systems used in rural, unsewered areas of Clark County. Unlike public sewer systems, septic systems require routine maintenance for proper functioning.



How Septic Systems Work

A typical septic system contains two major components: a septic tank and a soil drainfield.

- ◆ **The septic tank:** Removes solids, which helps protect the soil drainfield from clogging that can result in premature failure of the onsite system.
- ◆ Digests a portion of the solids and stores the remaining portion. Up to 50% of the solids that remain in the tank decompose. The remaining 50% accumulates in the bottom of the tank as sludge. When the level of sludge exceeds the tank's holding capacity, the sewage has less time to settle before leaving the tank. Eventually, the sludge level increases enough to allow solids to enter into the drainfield, resulting in damage to the field and the need for extensive repairs.

The soil drainfield:

- ◆ Is located underground in an unsaturated soil area on your property.
- ◆ Further treats the effluent through physical,

chemical, and biological processes. The field consists of a series of underground perforated pipes installed in a one-foot deep layer of washed gravel, or a series of plastic chamber units. Here, the effluent is distributed, stored, and ultimately applied to the soil for treatment. **After filtering through the soil, the treated effluent enters the groundwater level for final disposal.**

The owner of an onsite septic system is responsible for properly operating, monitoring, and maintaining the system to reduce the risk of failure. To accomplish this, the owner shall have the OSS inspected by a certified O & M specialist as required per Clark County Code (CCC 24.17):

Septic System Maintenance

Type of System		Frequency of Inspection
Pressure Distribution*	Every 2 years	Every 3 Years
Simple gravity with or without pump	Every 3 Years	Every 2 years
All alternative systems (sand mounds, ATU, Glendons®, etc.)	Yearly	Within one (1) year of the date of the sale of the home.
All food service establishments.	Yearly	Clark County received a waiver from WA-DOH for inspection every 2 years



During the O & M inspection, the certified O & M specialist will determine if all the components of the OSS are properly working and/or need cleaning (e.g. pumps, filter, floats, pressure lines, drainfield, etc.) Also, the certified O & M specialist will verify the need for septic tank pumping. This will be determined by measuring the depth of septic sludge and scum in the septic tank. Inspection results are submitted electronically to this department by the certified O & M specialist. These results may be viewed at: www.onlineRM.com.

Why should I maintain my system?

COST! Failing sewage systems are expensive to repair or replace. It typically costs between \$7,000 to \$15,000 or more to replace a failing system with a new, on-site sewage system. **GROUNDWATER PROTECTION!** 98% of the county's drinking water comes from groundwater.

Septic System Dos & DON'Ts

The performance and life span of your septic system is directly dependent on how the system is operated and maintained. With proper care, a typical system should operate relatively trouble free for between twenty and thirty years. The list of dos and don'ts on the following page are vital to the long-term, efficient performance of your onsite septic system.