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Septic System Maintenance

This article is condensed from *Maintaining Your Septic System—A Guide for Homeowners* published by the National Environmental Services Center

Buried beneath your back yard, it is out there—constantly working. It's your septic system. But if you are like most homeowners, you probably never give much thought to what happens when waste goes down your drain. And what you don't know *can* hurt you. Proper maintenance of your septic system can have a significant impact on how well it works and how long it lasts.

Preventing groundwater pollution from failing septic systems should be a priority for every community and every homeowner. Contamination of the groundwater source can lead to the pollution of local wells, streams, lakes, and ponds—exposing family, friends, and neighbors to waterborne diseases and other serious health risks.

There are three main reasons why septic system maintenance is so important: 1) Money. Failing septic systems are expensive to repair or replace, and improper maintenance by homeowners is a common cause of early system failure; 2) The health of your family, your community, and the environment. Untreated wastewater from failing septic systems can contaminate nearby wells, groundwater, and drinking water sources. Chemicals improperly disposed of through a septic system also can pollute local water sources. For this reason it is important for homeowners to educate themselves about what can and what cannot be disposed of through a septic system; 3) To maintain the economic health of your community. Failing septic systems may contribute to the pollution of the local rivers and lakes that attract tourists to our area and can cause property values to decline.

Septic system maintenance is often compared to automobile maintenance because only a little effort on a regular basis can save a lot of money and significantly prolong the life of the system. Annual inspections of your septic system are recommended to ensure that it is working properly and to determine when the septic tank should be pumped. Pumping your septic tank is probably the single most important thing that you can do to protect your system. If the buildup of solids in the tank becomes too high and solids move to the drainfield, this could clog and strain the system to the point where a new drainfield will be needed.

Sound septic system operation and maintenance practices include conserving water, being careful that nothing harmful is disposed of through the system, and by educating everyone in your household about what is and what isn't good for septic systems.

Develop good maintenance habits and everyone will benefit.

Follow this link to access the complete article

http://www.nesc.wvu.edu/pdf/ww/septic/pl_fall04.pdf

Easy to read with lots of diagrams

http://www.epa.gov/owm/septic/pubs/homeowner_guide_long.pdf

Managing Your Septic System from Michigan State University Extension – short and sweet.

Page 4 has a nice form to use for keeping an accurate record of septic system maintenance.

<http://www.ci.northville.mi.us/Services/PublicWorks/ManagingYourSepticSystem.pdf>