

PROPER SITING, MAINTENANCE, AND INSPECTION OF SEPTIC TANKS

SITING:

- (1) "Minimum Design and Construction" - Septic tanks shall provide a minimum of 24 hours of retention and shall be designed and constructed to equal or exceed minimum design and construction criteria established by the county Health Department as published in the current Manual for On-Site Sewage Management Systems. After the effective date of these regulations, any person seeking approval of septic tanks to be used in on-site sewage management systems, shall submit detailed plans and specifications for tank manufacture and other information as may be required by the Health Department. Manufacturers and suppliers may be subject to periodic inspection, and approval by the county Board of Health or the Health Department. Both the inlet and outlet tees shall be ASTM 3034 rated or equivalent. In addition, an approved filter shall be installed on the outlet end of the septic tank in compliance with the Manual for On-Site Sewage Management Systems.
- (2) "Location" - No septic tank shall be installed less than fifty feet (50') from existing or proposed wells/springs, sink holes, or suction water lines, and tanks shall be located downgrade from wells or springs if physically possible; less than twenty-five feet (25') from lakes, ponds, streams, water courses, and other impoundments; less than ten feet (10') from pressure water supply lines, or less than ten feet (10') from a property line. No septic tank shall be installed less than fifteen feet (15') from drainage ditch or embankment. Septic tanks shall be installed so as to provide ready access for necessary maintenance. Normally, the distance a septic tank should be located from a building foundation is at least ten feet (10') but, lesser distances may be allowed by the County Board of Health. The County Board of health, after site inspection, may require greater separation distances than cited herein due to unusual conditions of topography, or other site configuration; subsurface soil characteristics and/or groundwater interferences.
- (3) "Capacity" – The liquid capacity of septic tanks for single family dwellings shall be one thousand (1000) gallons for one, two, three, or four bedrooms, and 250 additional gallons for each bedroom over four. Septic tank capacity shall be increased by (50%) where garbage grinders are to be used. Auxiliary systems serving single family residences or other facilities shall be based on the maximum daily flow.
- (4) "Compartmented Tanks" – Two compartment tanks shall be required. The first compartment shall be at least 2/3 the liquid capacity of the tank.
- (5) "Tanks in Series" – The County Board of Health may approve the installation of two septic tanks placed in series provided that the capacity of the first tank is at least one thousand (1000) gallons and at least equal to the capacity of the second tank. When tanks in series are used, they shall be connected with a sealed sewer line, and all sewage shall initially enter the first tank.
- (6) "Foundation and Backfill" – Septic tanks will be constructed or installed level, on a foundation that will prevent settling; backfill shall be placed so that a stable fill results and undue strain on the tank is avoided. Earth backfill shall be free of voids, large

stones, stumps, broken masonry, or other such materials. A minimum earth cover of six inches (6) over the tank is recommended. With proper documentation the County Board of Health may approve less cover. All openings and manholes shall be constructed so as to prevent the entrance of surface water.

MAINTENANCE:

- (1) “Minimize the Liquid Load” – The less water you produce, the less the soil will have to absorb. Water conservation is the cheapest and easiest way to protect your septic system. Remember the maximum gallons of the septic tank must not be exceeded in any one day. This can be achieved by repairing leaky fixtures. Washing clothes only when you have a full load. Avoid doing several loads in one day. The septic system design includes the average use of the clothes washer (definition of average use—three to four loads per week). Take short showers or baths. Don’t turn the shower on all the way and turn off the water while lathering. Install a water-saving device in the shower system. Use a water-saving device in your toilet tank and don’t flush unnecessarily. Don’t let water run while washing teeth, hands, vegetables, dishes, etc. Use a stopped basin. Many other ways of conserving water exist. Use water-saving devices where feasible. Be alert and institute other water-saving ideas.
- (2) “Minimize the Solids Load” – Do not use your septic system for anything that can be disposed of some other way. The less material you put into your septic tank, the better the quality of the effluent going to the leaching system. Minimize or avoid using the garbage disposal unit. Remove scraps with the garbage or properly compost them. Collect grease in a container near the sink rather than pouring it down the drain. Minimize the discharge of paper products. Non-degradable items, such as disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, Kleenex, kitty litter and paper towels are especially harmful. Use a good quality approved toilet tissue that breaks up easily when wet. Basically three products should go into the septic tank: human waste, toilet paper, and water from toilets, bathing fixtures, kitchen sinks, and laundry washers. Ordinary use of household chemicals will not affect the bacteria in your system **if** not used in excessive amounts. Do not use your tank to get rid of oils, paints, insecticides, or other poisonous liquids. Septic tank additives, chemicals, yeast, bacteria, enzymes, etc, increase the bacterial solids break down in the tank and will affect (increase) the time between routine pumping. **This is one of the best things a home owner can do to add years to the life of their system.** However, experiments with chemicals to unclog absorption fields have **not** been proven reliable.
- (3) “Additional Means to Protect the Installed Septic System” – Do not plant large trees over the absorption system. Small feeder roots will enter the drain holes of the leach field drain lines and form a mat within the drain line. This mat blocks the flow in the level drain line rendering the remainder of the line unusable. Large roots may displace the drain line. As a general rule, large trees must be as distant as possible from any trenches. Trees with a trunk diameter of nine inches should be at least ten feet distance from any trenches. Ideally the leachline/bed system should be left in uncovered open

sunny areas so as to be provided maximum evaporation. This is an important factor in these systems, but not applicable to seepage pits or dry wells. Do not allow rain water to pond over the leach field. Maximum saturation and temporary failure may occur until the pending dissipates. Do not construct walkways, patios, swimming pools, permanent structures or parking lots, over or within the leachline/bed areas. This would prevent maximum evaporation, may cause damage to the system and may cause a premature failure. Keep vehicles off your leachline/bed system; driving over them repeatedly can damage underground pipes and soil porosity. Your tank should be routinely pumped at least every three years or once a year if a commercial establishment depending on how many persons occupy the home (see chart below). **Longer, if you perform some preventive maintenance.**

TABLE 1. SEPTIC TANK PUMPING FREQUENCY IN YEARS										
HOUSEHOLD SIZE - NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Tank-Gallons	SEPTIC TANK PUMPING FREQUENCY IN YEARS									
1000	12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.7
1250	15.6	7.5	4.8	3.4	2.6	2.0	1.7	1.4	1.2	1.0
1500	18.9	9.1	5.9	4.2	3.3	2.6	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.3
1750	22.1	10.7	6.9	5.0	3.9	3.1	2.6	2.2	1.9	1.6
2000	25.4	12.4	8.0	5.9	4.5	3.7	3.1	2.6	2.2	2.0
2250	28.6	14.0	9.1	6.7	5.2	4.2	3.5	3.0	2.6	2.3

(4) “Steps to Consider if Your Leaching System Fails”- If a septic tank pumper, soils engineer, or other competent professional has determined that your leaching system has failed, a portion or all of the system may have to be replaced. If your system requires repair or replacement, contact a reputable, licensed septic tank contractor. The old system need not be abandoned completely. Your contractor may advise simply adding on to the existing system with a new seepage pit. This is referred to as a “Series Connection”.

INSPECTION:

(1) “Have Your House Inspected Before Buying or Selling” - A C-42 licensed septic tank contractor can perform this service for you and will verify in writing the condition of the septic system. You should request a “Septic Certification”. This test may consist of visual, loading & dye testing. If you already own your home and are concerned about failure of your septic system have periodic inspections done every three (3) to five (5) years by a qualified licensed septic tank inspector/contractor.