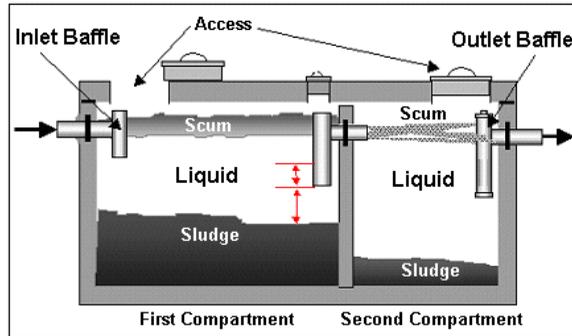


SYSTEM DESIGN

A septic system includes a SEPTIC TANK and an UNDERGROUND DRAIN FIELD. A side view of a septic tank may look like this:



THE SEPTIC TANK

The septic tank provides a place to hold wastes. Most solids settle to the bottom of the tank. Floating materials form a scum layer on top. Liquids (in the middle) flow into the drain field to be absorbed into the soil. Some solids are changed to liquid by bacterial action. This is called "digestion".

SEPTIC OUTFLOW

A septic tank's outflow is partially clarified sewage. The tank does not provide complete treatment, so the sewage may still contain harmful bacteria or viruses.

THE DRAIN FIELD

The drain field provides additional treatment for partially clarified liquids from the tank. Bacteria and other organisms further decompose the sewage allowing the liquids to seep more readily into the soil.

SOIL TYPES

Some soils are more suitable than others for septic systems. If the soil is not ideal, there may be options for an engineered system that will provide supplemental treatment, or connection to the public sewer system, if available, may be required. The Environmental Health division can answer questions about soils and their suitability for septic systems.

HOW TO LOCATE THE TANK

- Follow the sewer line from the house. Probe the ground with a metal rod or listen for the sound of a plumber's snake hitting the tank inlet, or
- Visit the Health Department to check records, or
- If installing a new system, keep your permit record.
- When you find the septic tank, make a sketch of the system on the back of this brochure. Keep in a safe place for future reference.

SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

For satisfactory, trouble-free service from your septic tank, pump out the sludge (solids) periodically. If the tank becomes too full of sludge and scum, undigested solids will flow into the drain field, clog it and prevent liquids from being absorbed into the soil.

PUMPING FREQUENCY AND COST

Sludge and scum should be pumped out every three to seven years. No definite interval can be set because homes vary in size, number of residents, use of garbage disposal and washing machine.

Pumpers issued certification by the Environmental Health division are deemed to be in compliance with California Health and Safety Code Sections 117405-117450. You may find a list of these Certified Pumpers on our website. Charges may vary, so get estimates. Request that both compartments be pumped out. The cost of periodic pumping is nominal compared to the cost of replacing a failed system. Pumping after the system has failed may not correct the problem. Keep a record of pumping on the back of this brochure.

PREVENTING PROBLEMS

WASTE WATER CONTROL – The less waste water you produce, the less the soil will have to absorb. Water conservation is a cheap and easy way to protect your system.

- Repair leaky plumbing fixtures. To check for toilet leaks, drop food coloring into the toilet tank and watch for color seeping into the bowl before flushing.
- Wash clothes only when you have a full load. Avoid doing several loads in one day.
- Take brief showers or use less water in the tub.
- Use water saving devices in toilet and shower.
- Do not let the faucet run while washing hands, vegetables, dishes, etc., or while brushing your teeth.
- Grade and slope your property to prevent water from running into the drain field.
- Utilize timers on major appliances so that they run during off-peak hours.
- Look for other ways to conserve water.

PREVENTING PROBLEMS

PRECAUTIONS ABOUT SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Do not use your septic system for anything that can be disposed of by some other method. We recommend only three things be allowed into the septic tank.

- Human Waste
- Toilet paper
- Water from the kitchen, the bathroom and the laundry.

Avoid using a garbage disposal unit. Compost scraps or wrap and throw them into a garbage can. If you do use a disposal, plan to pump your septic tank more frequently.

Collect grease in a closed container and put it into the garbage can instead of down the drain.

Minimize the flushing of paper products. Non-biodegradable items, such as disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, paper tissues or paper towels are especially harmful. Use toilet tissue that breaks up easily when wet.

KEEP GROUND CLEAR

- Do not plant trees or large shrubs near your system. Roots will clog the drain field and pipes.
- Building codes require structures to be at least five (5) feet from the system.
- Paving over a drain field will reduce its effectiveness.
- Keep heavy vehicles and livestock off the system to avoid damaging pipes and compacting the soil.

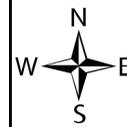
ADDITIVES

- It is not necessary to use additives. The naturally occurring bacteria in solids help break down the sewage.
- It should not harm your tank to use normal amounts of household detergent, soap or laundry bleach, etc.
- It is illegal to dump insecticides, toxic chemicals or liquids such as paint, thinner or motor oil into the septic system.

NEW CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIRS

If your plumbing backs up suddenly under normal use in dry weather there is probably an obstruction between the home and tank, such as tree roots in the pipe. More serious difficulties occur when solids from the tank clog the perforated pipe or soil. Once this happens a leachline replacement is necessary. New construction and repairs require a permit from Environmental Health. Visit the website or the office for a list of Certified Installer's and Designers that will work with you and Environmental Health during your system repairs. Never add chemicals to an ailing septic system, as that may result in more expensive repairs or an illegal discharge of chemical into the groundwater.

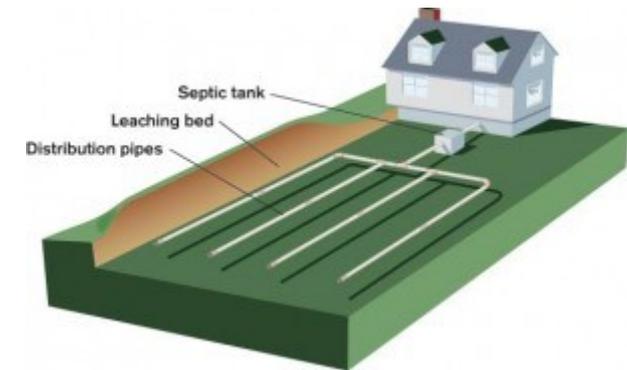
DRAW A MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM



Blank area for drawing a map showing the location of your septic system, including the house, septic tank, and distribution pipes.

MAINTENANCE RECORD		
DATE	WORK DONE	DONE BY

SEPTIC TANK CARE



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ENVIRONMENT HEALTH DIVISION

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