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Homeowner's Septic System Maintenance Guide

Did you know that as a homeowner you're responsible for maintaining your septic system and that you should periodically inspect your system and pump out your septic tank? If your septic system isn't maintained, you might need to replace it, costing you thousands of dollars. A malfunctioning system can contaminate groundwater that might be a source of drinking water.

Top Four Things You Can Do to Protect Your Septic System:

1. Regularly inspect your system and pump your tank as necessary.
 - You should have a typical septic system inspected at least every 3 years by a professional and your tank pumped as recommended by the inspector (generally every 3 to 5 years). Average indoor water use in the typical single-family home is almost 70 gallons per person per day. Leaky toilets can waste as much as 200 gallons each day.
2. Use water efficiently.
 - The more water a household conserves, the less water enters the septic system. Efficient water use can improve the operation of the septic system and reduce the risk of failure.
3. Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.
 - What goes down the drain can have a major impact on how well your septic system works. What shouldn't you flush down your toilet? Dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, cat litter, paper towels, and other kitchen and bathroom items that can clog and potentially damage septic system components if they become trapped. Flushing household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze, and paint can stress or destroy the biological treatment taking place in the system or might contaminate surface waters and groundwater. If your septic tank pumper is concerned about quickly accumulating scum layers, reduce the flow of floatable materials like fats, oils, and grease into your tank or be prepared to pay for more frequent inspections and pumping.
4. Care for your drain field. Your drain field is an important part of your septic system. Here are a few things you should do to maintain it:

- Plant only grass over and near your septic system. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs might clog and damage the drain field.
- Don't drive or park vehicles on any part of your septic system. Doing so can compact the soil in your drain field or damage the pipes, tank, or other septic system components.
- Keep roof drains, basement sump pump drains, and other rainwater or surface water drainage systems away from the drain field. Flooding the drain field with excessive water slows down or stops treatment processes and can cause plumbing fixtures to back up.

For more info, read the EPA's 16-page Homeowner Septic System Guide:

https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/homeowner_guide_long.pdf

Keep a maintenance record:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/08b27db1401/7bf2ac49-f0ef-4212-b947-822c154293f8.pdf>

Georgia Department of Public Health Homeowner Septic System Guide:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/08b27db1401/5ec05776-a132-439e-a2c7-54029c00a10a.pdf>