



## Water Quality: A Citizen's Guide



### On Site Septic: What You Should Know

Sewage and soap suds are ruining the carpet and furniture in your basement. Foul smelling water is puddled in the yard. Don't let this happen to you. If you are not on a municipal sewer system, then you have an on-site septic system. A well-maintained septic system protects your investment in your home. If properly maintained, your septic system can provide long-term, effective treatment of household wastewater.

#### Signs of Failure

- Pooling water or muddy soil around your septic system.
- Water backing up into your basement.
- Your toilet or sink backing up when you flush or do laundry.

- Strips of bright green grass over the drain field.

#### What can you do?

- Don't use excess water. Using too much water is the single biggest reason for system malfunction.
- Don't add additives, they only harm your system.
- Don't damage it. The septic system is buried just beneath the ground surface and can be damaged if you pave over it, drive over it or park on top of it.
- Don't direct excess rain water to the area where the septic system is buried. Water from the septic tank travels through

the laterals to drain through the soil. If the soil is already wet, the water may back up in your system or pool on the ground. Make sure downspouts and yard drainage are directed to other areas of your yard.

- Do install risers and inspection ports. Because the system is buried, it is difficult to inspect to check for problems leading to a malfunction. Small inspection ports are easy to install and can allow inspectors to easily check your system.

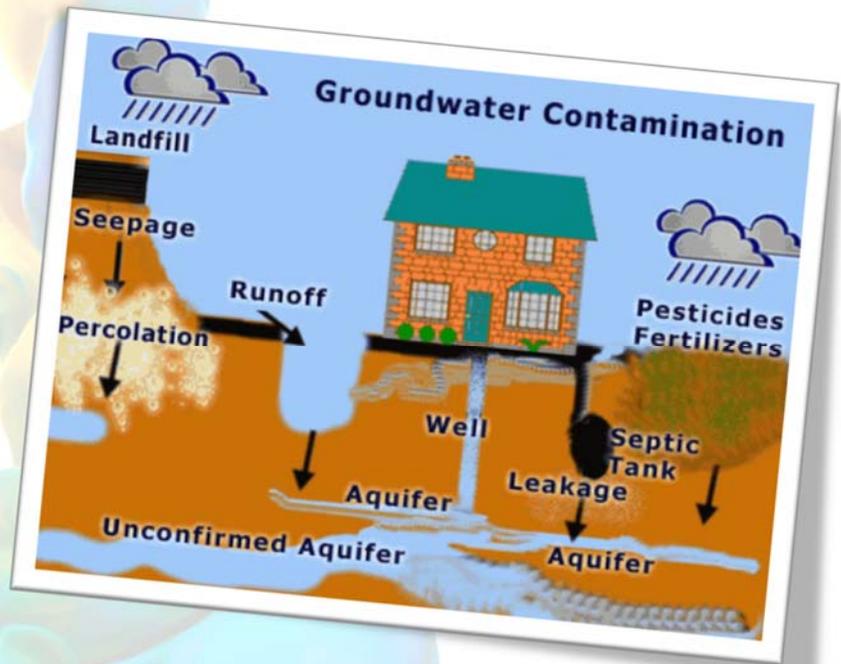
- Do get a yearly inspection. An annual inspection of the lateral lines will reveal possible problems.
- Do check septic tanks for damage every three years and pump out solid material when needed.

## Save Money

If your septic system isn't maintained, you will need to replace it, costing you thousands of dollars. And if you sell your home, your septic system must be in good working order.

## Protect the Environment

Proper maintenance of your septic system prevents the spread of infection and disease and protects water resources. Inadequately treated sewage from failed septic systems can cause groundwater contamination, posing a significant threat to drinking water. Improperly treated sewage that contaminates nearby surface waters also increases the chance of swimmers contracting a variety of infectious diseases.



## Who do you call?

Consult your local telephone directory or [www.septicyellowpages.com](http://www.septicyellowpages.com). The Septic Yellow Pages provides listings by state for professional septic pumpers, installers, inspectors, and tank manufacturers and will answer simple questions about your septic system.

Having a clean environment is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean waterways provide recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, and add beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water - and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater clean. For more easy steps on protecting our lakes and streams, visit [www.mywatersheds.org](http://www.mywatersheds.org).



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