

Loss Prevention Safety Tip



Loss Prevention
Program

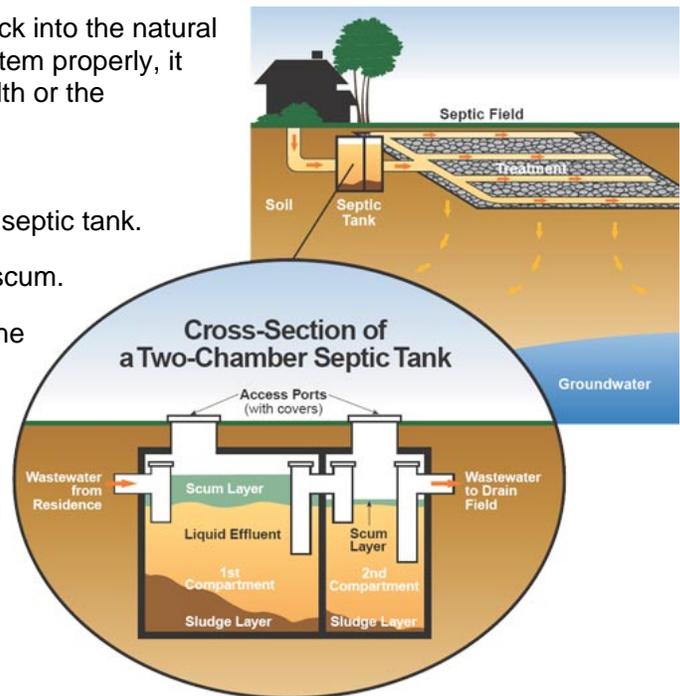
By Red River Mutual

SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

Septic systems are designed to safely recycle wastewater back into the natural environment. If you don't operate or maintain your septic system properly, it can be dangerous for your family, pose a threat to public health or the environment and affect neighbouring property owners.

HOW DOES A SEPTIC SYSTEM WORK

1. Waste separates into sludge, liquid and scum inside the septic tank.
2. Naturally occurring bacteria break down the sludge and scum.
3. Solids that can't be broken down settle at the bottom of the tank and must be pumped out regularly.
4. The liquid flows out of the tank into a network of underground pipes that drain into the septic field.
5. Naturally occurring 'good' bacteria in the soil feed on and break down harmful chemicals and bacteria, completing the treatment process and returning clean water to the groundwater system.



SEPTIC TANK INSPECTION & PUMPING

Tanks need to be inspected and pumped on a regular basis (recommended every three years) to remove the accumulated layers of scum and sludge. A licensed septic professional should be used for any repairs or service as deadly gases are present in a sewage holding tank. Never enter a septic tank yourself!

Pumping out the septic tank in summer or early fall is recommended as it allows enough time before winter for the bacteria to start working again.

SEPTIC FIELD MAINTENANCE

One of the major problems with septic fields is compaction. Compacted soil cannot treat wastewater since no oxygen is present, and no longer acts as an insulator to help prevent freezing. Compaction can also cause pipes to shift; therefore the gravity flow may no longer be able to transport the water to the proper location. To prevent compaction, septic fields need to be protected from vehicles, snowmobiles, ATV's and other heavy equipment. Be sure to stay off the system when the ground is soft.



Other recommendations for ensuring an effective septic field include:

- Plant grass or bedding plants, water sparingly and do not fertilize. Do not plant large trees or shrubs as their roots can clog the system or damage pipes.
- Keep rainwater and sump pump runoff away from the septic field.
- Keep heavy vehicles and equipment off your field.
- Do not build over the septic field.
- Insulate your system against the cold. Allow grass to grow longer or put down a layer of loose hay or straw.

GENERAL SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE TIPS

- Reduce the amount of water entering the system. Install water-efficient appliances and devices such as low-flow toilets and shower heads, and maximize the capacity of your dishwasher and washing machine.
- Use biodegradable or environmentally friendly cleaning products.
- Don't use a garburator as it can double the amount of solids in your tank.
- Keep out solids that could clog up the system and chemicals that harm the good bacteria. This includes fat, grease, oil, coffee grounds, kitchen waste, personal hygiene products, paper towels, medications, disinfectants, bleach, etc.

WARNING SIGNS OF A FAILING SEPTIC SYSTEM

Watch for these warning signs of a failing septic system. If you notice a problem, it is important that you take action immediately to protect your home, your family's health and the environment. Contact a qualified practitioner to advise you on how to proceed.

- Sewage surfacing on lawns or in ditches
- Smell of raw sewage around the yard
- Sewage backing up into toilets, tubs or sinks
- Plumbing fixtures draining slowly
- Soft areas or patches of lush growth on top of the septic field

**Not in My
Septic System!**

X Cloggers

diapers, cat litter, cigarette filters, coffee grounds, grease, feminine hygiene products, etc.

X Killers

household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze, paint, etc.

See more loss prevention tips at www.preventingloss.com

While the safety recommendations in this report are based on apparent and obvious conditions that were found at the time of inspection, the report does not purport to identify all hazards or guarantee compliance with any standards, codes, ordinances or regulations. It is not legal or expert advice, and should not be used in place of consultation with appropriate professionals. Any person relying on this information does so entirely at their own risk. Red River Mutual denies all responsibility for any liability, loss, injury or risk which is incurred as a direct or indirect result of the use of any of the recommendations in this report.