

SEPTIC TANKS MAINTENANCE

Failure on maintenance, the septic tank allows an excessive build up which causes scouring. This action agitates the field. Solid material overflowing into the leach field plugs the pipes and clogs soil pores in the absorption area causing the septic system to fail.

Two main factors cause solid material to build up enough to overflow: Bacterial deficiency and lack of sludge removal.

Bacterial Deficiency:

Bacteria must be present in the septic tank to digest the organic solids. Normal household wastes provide enough bacteria to digest the solid **unless** any harm is done to the bacteria. Bacteria is very sensitive to environmental changes. Many home-care products used in most homes every day will destroy bacteria. Following are some commonly used home care products that will kill bacteria necessary for a proper septic tank operation if not used in moderation:

- Detergents, bleach, disinfectants, polishes, toilet cleaners, acids, cleaning compounds, caustic drain openers, sink & tub cleaners.

Sludge Removal:

The sludge in the septic tank-inorganic and inert material and by-products of bacterial digestion-is not biodegradable and will not decompose. If not removed, sludge will accumulate until it overflows, again clogging the soil absorption area.

Normal maintenance consists of periodically pumping the sludge that accumulates in the bottom of the tank. How frequently depends on the size of the tank, the usage, and the condition of the system. Pumping is usually recommended every 1-3 years, when the sludge in the tank is approaching the 1/3 full mark.

Only a professional should pump a septic tank. Never go down into a septic tank. The gases present can cause poisoning or asphyxia. To pump the tank, the cover must be removed. This is the only way to be sure that all solids have been pumped out. Use proper equipment to avoid scum plugging the outlet baffle. A septic tank cannot be cleaned adequately by pumping out liquids through a 4-inch inspection pipe. Doing so often results in some of the scum layer plugging the outlet baffle when the tank refills with sewage.

Tank location must allow easy access of a pump truck. The Septic Tank must be gravity fed and buried as shallow as possible. Local codes will stipulate the distance of setbacks required