

4 Maintain Your System



Protect Your System from Malfunction

“Sewage systems should be inspected every year, and they usually need servicing every two to five years, depending on the number of people using the system and the volume of daily sewage flow. Homeowners should consult an authorized person or the sewage system maintenance plans for specific monitoring and maintenance requirements.” — *HealthLink BC*

Maintenance Requirements

If properly maintained, systems will perform as intended and last for a long time. If not, they may malfunction, become expensive to repair and potentially create a risk to public health. Proper maintenance leads to lower cost of ownership.



A homeowner must engage an Authorized Person — either a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner, Maintenance Provider, or a Professional Engineer with suitable competency to maintain sewerage systems.



Maintenance Schedule

For Type 1: Every 2-5 years

For Type 2 or 3: Every year

Maintenance: *More than just pumping out the tank*

Regular pump outs are an important step, but are just one part of looking after your system. Septic tanks are designed to accumulate sludge and scum up to a maximum of 1/3 of the tank, and the remaining space allows “treatment” to occur when solids sink to the bottom or float to the top. **Removing these solids is important.**

However, the other important step includes maintaining your drainfield (soil dispersal system). The goal of drainfield maintenance is to ensure that the wastewater arrives at the drainfield properly and that the drainfield is able to absorb the wastewater without any signs of backup or sogginess at the surface (“effluent”).

“Each component of the system from the tank to the field should be examined on a regular basis to confirm that it is structurally sound and functioning correctly, and that all mechanical and electrical parts are in good working order. The components can then be cleaned as required and any necessary repairs carried out.”

— *Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC*

Effluent Filters

All systems should have an effluent filter. They have been a requirement on systems since 1996 and can be retrofitted to older systems. The filter helps to extend the lifespan of the system by keeping solids in the tank where they can be pumped out and treated. If solids make it into your drainfield its life will be much shorter. The effluent filters can be replaced or cleaned during maintenance activities and will vary based on your usage. Always maintain easy access to your filter location in case of a clog or back up.

Additives

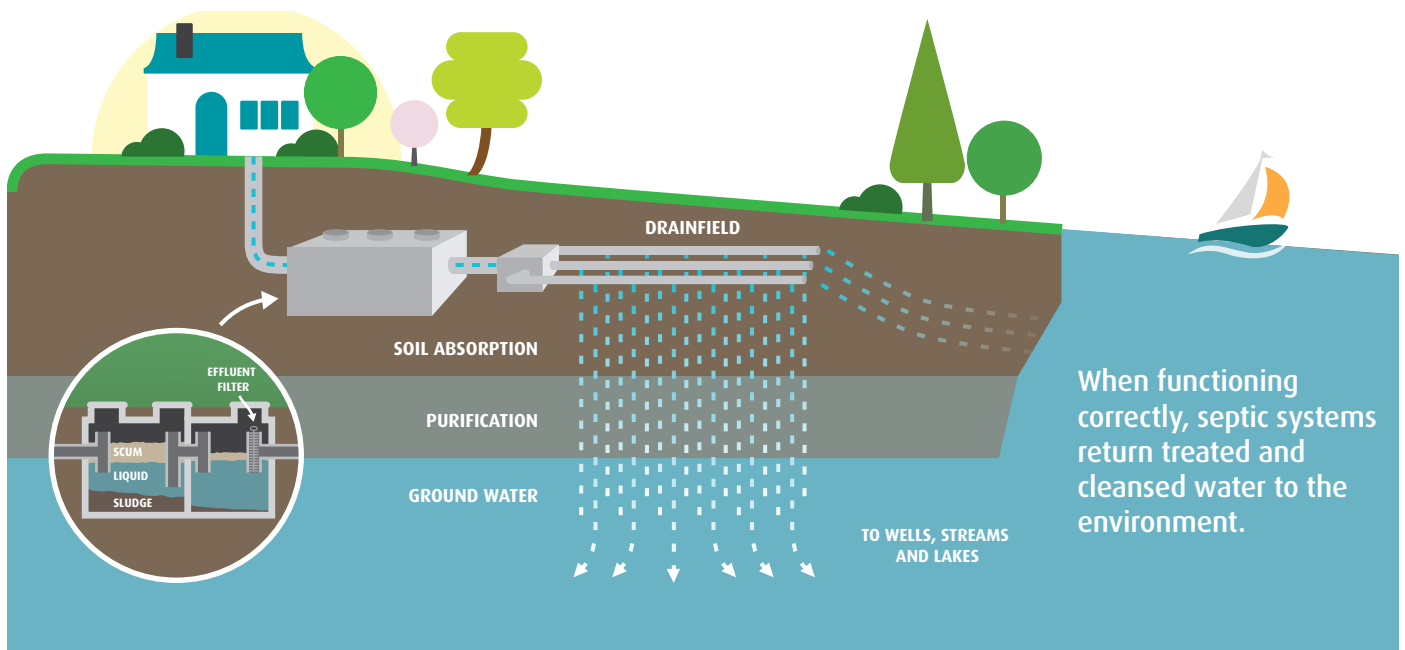
Your septic system does not need additives. Additives mislead homeowners into the belief that pumping can be reduced or eliminated. Septic systems are designed to collect solids and be pumped out. If there are no solids in your tank then they have been flushed into the drainfield, a cause for concern. The human intestine provides the best bacteria for digesting wastewater and no further “stimulators” are needed.

Pump Outs

When to pump out a septic system depends on a number of factors: the size of the tank, the number of users and the types of items going down the drain. Typically it falls between two and five years, although may be shorter or longer. Pumping your system is one of the best things you can do to maintain its longevity. A maintenance provider can measure the accumulation in your tank and recommend a pumping frequency that best suits your usage.

“Regular preventative maintenance is **cheap**. Replacing a system due to lack of maintenance is **not**.”

— *Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC*



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