

1 An introduction to your septic system



Over 28,000 properties in the capital region have septic systems. Many homeowners don't realize there is a problem until their system is already malfunctioning. Knowing how to care for your septic system requires some basic knowledge, and this information kit is a great place to start! Not only will proper maintenance save you money, but it will also protect local water quality and the health of everyone in your community.

Impacts to our environment

Septic systems utilize the environment to treat and receive our wastewater. Although there are many system designs they all use the same principles and they all discharge treated wastewater underground, within the watershed you live in. Many of our local water bodies are suffering due to pollution from human activities. Septic systems, if not functioning correctly, can be one of the sources of this pollution.



Protect our health

All wastewater contains fecal coliforms, bacteria present in intestines of humans and animals, however in the environment they indicate that there is untreated wastewater present. This untreated wastewater can carry dangerous viruses and pathogens like Giardia, Cryptosporidia, Hepatitis and Salmonella. When septic systems malfunction, they can cause untreated or partially treated wastewater to be exposed. For this reason, septic systems can be a significant health risk in our communities.

Signs of malfunction:

- Slow drains and toilets
- Gurgling sounds in the plumbing
- Unpleasant odours around the property
- Patches of lush growth over the drainfield
- Soggy or wet ground over the drainfield
- Drain flies over soggy areas

YOUR WATERSHED

A watershed is an area of land that drains rainwater and groundwater to a common point, such as a creek, stream, lake or ocean. We all live in a watershed... which watershed does your system drain into?

Learn more at crd.bc.ca/watershed

Protect. Inspect. Maintain.

Be septic savvy and protect, inspect and maintain.

Protect your system by paying attention to what goes down the drain and what goes overtop of the sensitive drainfield.

Inspect your system. If you don't know where your system components are located or if you don't have a maintenance plan, an inspection is a good place to start.

Maintain your system by having regular visits by an authorized person who will check the components and report on the operation and condition of the system.

Regulations & Responsibilities



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Public Health Act & Septic Regulation

Standard Practice Guidelines

Policies & Guidelines



HOMEOWNER

Owns the septic system

Hires an authorized person to work on the system

Required to maintain system



AUTHORIZED PERSONS

Trained to design, construct & maintain system

Required to submit plans & filings to health authority

Submits diagrams & maintenance plan to homeowner



HEALTH AUTHORITY

Accepts filing documents & certifications

Investigates system failures & health hazards

Issues orders for repairs

If you are a septic system owner, you are a wastewater treatment system operator.

All sewage systems need ongoing and proper maintenance. As the owner of a sewage system, you are responsible for its proper operation, ongoing maintenance and record keeping.