



Septic Smarts

Understanding Your Septic System

A septic system treats and disposes of household wastewater.

When maintained properly, it ensures that harmful bacteria and pollutants don't enter water systems, safeguarding your health and the environment. Without proper care, however, it can lead to expensive repairs, groundwater contamination, and potential health hazards.

“Septic maintenance is not a luxury, it is a necessity to ensure that the system is functioning as intended and within the parameters of the design,” said Lynne Seipp, executive director of the [National Association of Wastewater Technicians](#). “Changes to how the system is used: number of people in the home, running a business out of a home, landscaping and many other issues, need to be addressed prior to implementation, not after the system starts showing signs of struggling.”

Remember these Helpful Tips

- **Think at the Sink!** What goes down the drain has a big impact on your septic system. Fats, grease, and solids can clog a system's pipes and drainfield.
- **Don't Overload the Commode!** A toilet is not a trash can. Disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, and cat litter can damage a septic system.
- **Don't Strain Your Drain!** Use water efficiently and stagger use of water-based appliances. Too much water use at once can overload a system that hasn't been pumped recently.
- **Shield Your Field!** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and livestock can damage your septic drainfield.
- **Keep It Clean!** Contamination can occur when a septic system leaks due to improper maintenance. Be sure your drinking water is safe to drink by testing it regularly.
- **Protect It and Inspect It!** Regular septic system maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars in repairs and protect public health.

Septic Smart Living: Your Role in Effective Wastewater Management *by Larissa Balzer of Ocean Sewage Alliance*

Owning a home is more than just having a place to live; it's about taking on responsibilities that ensure your household runs smoothly and sustainably. If your home relies on a septic system, you might not realize it, but you have an important role—you're not just a homeowner; you're also a wastewater treatment operator! While this might sound daunting, embracing this role is crucial for maintaining your system's health and protecting your shared neighborhood environment.

Let's delve into why septic system maintenance is important and how you can fulfill your role with six simple principles.