

Would you know if your Septic System needed surgery?

It's not easy to know what's going on internally in a septic system, but it isn't pretty when the system breaks down. Paying attention to clues and symptoms can help keep everything running smoothly and prevent uncomfortable, awkward, and costly issues.

Why should you take time out of your busy day to think about your septic system?

Because your septic system is the digestive system of your home. It carries away and treats waste, protecting the value of your home, the health of your family and the fresh water resources of the community. Just like your body, you can't see what's going on inside your septic system, and most people don't even think twice about it... until there is a problem.



Check your drainfield for these symptoms:

- Puddles or saturation
- Dead spots or suspiciously vigorous vegetation
- Sewage on the surface
- Putrid stench

And certainly, if you have back-ups in your sink and toilets, **THIS IS A SIGN OF TROUBLE!**

Watching out for these signs is a good start but accurately identifying the root cause of a failing septic system takes experience.



So if there's a problem... **who you gonna call???** The health department, a licensed septic tank pumper or a certified septic installer.

Just as you trust your doctor to help diagnose and prescribe treatments, these professionals assess the problem and make sure your system is working properly. They can also offer maintenance suggestions to save you money and aggravation.



Save money!

The average cost of a replacement septic system is **\$9,000 – 15,000**. Even smaller repairs can be quite costly.

Save your yard!

Avoid the unsightly hassle of having your yard all torn up.

Don't wait until disaster strikes. Regularly pump out your system every 3-5 years.

A pump out costs a few hundred dollars depending on where you live, your tank's size and whether your service provider has to locate or uncover it.





An apple a day

Keep sprinklers and excess water off the drainfield to prevent saturation.

Keep roots out. No woody vegetation (shrubs, trees, deep-rooted plants) within five feet of the drainfield. Fifteen feet is even better!

Avoid parking on the drainfield to prevent compaction.

Get your tank routinely pumped every 3-5 years (or as recommended by your inspector) to prevent solids, grease and fats from getting into drainfield pipes and gravel.

What goes in must come out

No garbage or food waste.



No medicines, chemicals, or home toxics.

Keep grease, oils and fats out.

Only wastewater from toilets, sinks, dishwashers and clothes washers.

Limit fluids

Suit the size of your septic tank to the number of bedrooms in the home.

Do laundry daily instead of several loads on one day to prevent overload.

Use low-flow showerheads and water-efficient toilets.

Take shorter showers, turn off the water when brushing teeth, soaping hands, or shaving.

Fix plumbing leaks.



RATE YOUR RISK!

Rate your septic system's risk for failing.

How old is your septic system?

- A. 5 years or fewer
- B. 6 to 20 years
- C. Older than 20 years

How often is your tank pumped?

- A. At least every 3-5 years
- B. More than 5 years between pumping
- C. Has not been pumped/ don't know

How often do you pour oils, paints, grease etc. down the drain?

- A. Never
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often

Do your sinks, tub and/or shower drain slowly?

- A. Never
- B. 2-3 times a year
- C. More than 3 times a year

Do vehicles or heavy equipment drive over the drainfield?

- A. Never
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often

IF YOU ANSWERED C FOR 3 OR MORE, IT'S TIME FOR A CHECK UP!

AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE TEAM:

The Washtenaw County Department of Public Health's Environmental Health Division offers expertise and information on septic systems including local regulations and guidelines, care and maintenance recommendations, a list of certified sewage system installation and repair contractors, Time of Sale Program requirements, public records on permits issued and inspections performed, and more...

Go to: www.washtenaw.org | Call: 734-222-3800



MORE SEPTIC SYSTEM RESOURCES:

The Livingston County Health Department, Environmental Health Division evaluates conditions for suitability of onsite sewage disposal, septic system construction, and complaints regarding improper operation and maintenance. It acts as the local permitting agency for all residential and small commercial onsite sewage treatment systems.

Go to: www.livgov.com/health/eh | Call: 517-546-9858



Huron River Watershed Council

www.hrwc.org

The Huron River Watershed Council coordinates programs and volunteer efforts aimed at protecting and restoring the Huron. Our work is supported through the membership of individuals, local businesses, and more than 40 communities across Southeast Michigan.



What is an H2O Hero?

You can be an H2O Hero! An H2O Hero protects water quality in their everyday actions. They pick up and dispose of pet waste in the trash, sweep fertilizer spills off sidewalks and driveways, choose phosphorus-free fertilizer, plant deep-rooted native plants or use rain gardens to capture and infiltrate runoff, and save water to save energy.

When you help keep pollution out of our streams, lakes, wetlands and groundwater with simple steps taken right in your own home or back yard, YOU are an H2O Hero!

The H2O Heroes campaign...

Is brought to you by communities that are committed to protecting water quality and securing our watershed as a permanent source of clean drinking water, natural beauty, and diverse recreational opportunities. Partners include Ann Arbor Charter Township, Ann Arbor Public Schools, Barton Hills Village, City of Ann Arbor, City of Belleville, City of Chelsea, City of Dexter, City of Ypsilanti, Eastern Michigan University, Pittsfield Charter Township, Scio Township, Superior Charter Township, University of Michigan-Environment, Health & Safety, Washtenaw County Road Commission, Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner, Ypsilanti Charter Township, and VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAHS).

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