How to Inspect a Soil-Based Wastewater System?

Do determine how quickly sludge and scum accumulate in the tank with semi-regular inspections. The tank should be full of wastewater.

Do have the sludge and scum pumped out of the septic tank when needed.

Don't turn off pumps or other electrical components, they are important and necessary components of the system and should be tested to determine if functioning correctly.

Do hire a licensed designer or engineer to inspect the system. They will research the size and location of the system components, expected flows, and the vitality of the leach field by inspecting it for a proper aerobic environment.

Don't purposefully stress a system to see if it is failed.

Do clean the effluent filter annually.

Don't dye test the system, the water flows from a dye test can overstress a system that was functioning and potentially cause it to fail.

Do install risers over the tank to provide easier access for the measuring and pumping of solids and the cleaning of the effluent filter.

Who We Are

About Us

We are the Drinking Water & Groundwater Protection Division for the State of Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Conservation. We work with landowners, designers, and engineers permitting potable water and wastewater systems, protecting Vermont's land and water for all. Our focus is to protect human health and the environment while encouraging innovation in design. Please contact your local Regional Office for assistance and a list of area designers and engineers.

Regional Office Contacts Montpelier: 802-828-5034 Springfield: 802-289-0603 Rutland: 802-786-5900 St Johnsbury: 802-751-0130 Essex: 802-879-5656

Web: www.septic.vt.gov

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Homeowners Guide to Onsite Wastewater Systems

So, you want to know more about your soil-based wastewater system?

Wastewater systems (often referred to as septic systems) provide treatment for wastewater from a home or business, eventually returning clean water to the local water table. A healthy wastewater system contains solids, scum, and grease in a septic tank and transports water to an area (leachfield) where it can be exposed to an aerobic microbe environment, which over time will clean the water. Final cleansing of the water, returning it to a potable state, requires it to percolate through soils, filtering it as it travels. The Vermont State Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division works with designers and engineers to determine the most suitable location and design for soil-based wastewater systems throughout the State, protecting the vitality of Vermont's groundwater.

Daily Wastewater System Management

- ✓ Conserve Water – Utilize low-flow plumbing fixtures and be water aware, systems do not have unlimited capacity.
- ✓ Repair or Replace leaking plumbing fixtures – water conservation extends the life of your system!
- ✓ Maintain proper landscape on and around your system – leachfields should be covered with grass and devoid of trees. Surface water, such as water from downspouts and driveways should be diverted away.
- ✓ Pump your tank regularly – Pumping out solids from a septic tank prevents clogs to the leachfield from forming. Additives have not been shown to be an effective.
- ✓ Limit what goes into the System – don't use it as a trash can, grease trap, or dispose of harmful chemicals.
- ✓ Do not drive or build on any part of your Wastewater System!
- ✓ Inspect the Wastewater system routinely – check for signs of problems in the system before failure occurs. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

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Preventive Maintenance Record

Date:
Work Done:
By:

Date:
Work Done:
By:

Date:
Work Done:
By:

Date:
Work Done:
By:

Your Wastewater System Installer

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Date System installed: _____

Your Septic Pumper

Name: _____

Phone: _____