



A GUIDE TO YOUR septic system



Most residents are concerned about keeping our waterways clean. In fact, surveys conducted across San Diego County show that **more than 50% of residents believe that pollution of our beaches, lakes, and creeks directly affects them and their families.** The County of San Diego Watershed Protection Program supports residents in their efforts to prevent pollution by offering these tips on how to properly maintain a septic system.

Septic Systems

Septic systems treat wastewater, which includes toilet, laundry, shower, and sink water, from your home before releasing it into the environment.



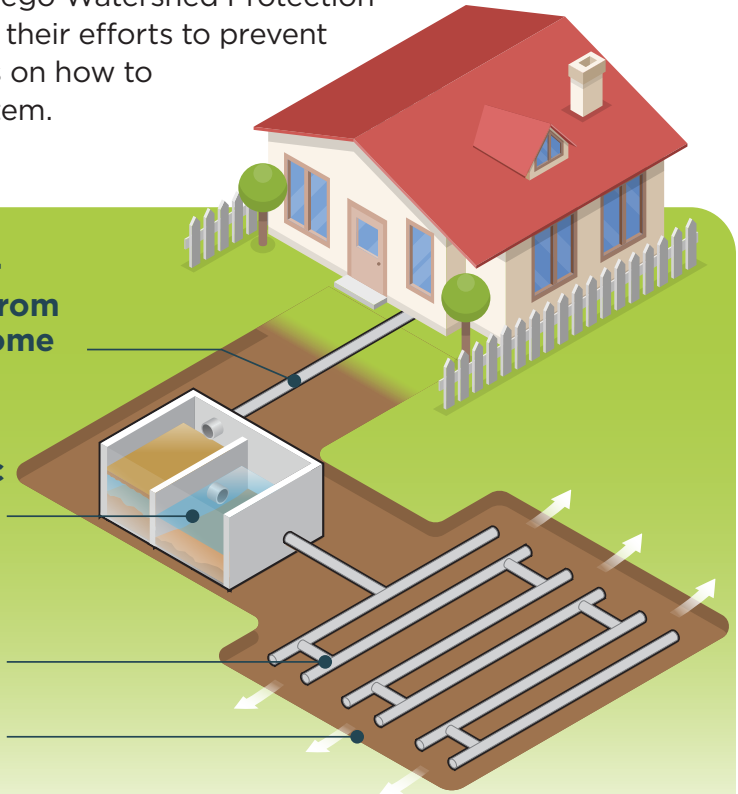
There is more to your septic system than just the tank. Your septic system is made up of four main parts:

Sewer pipe from the home

Septic tank

Leach field

Soil



Prevent Failures

If your septic system hasn't been properly maintained, a failure can occur, costing you money and contaminating our local environment. To maintain your septic system and prevent failures from happening, follow these simple Best Management Practices (BMPs):



Trash or compost food waste. Too much food waste can prevent bacteria from breaking down solids in the septic tank.



Trash solid materials like sanitary products, cotton balls, baby wipes, and flushable wipes since these will not break down and may clog pipes. Only toilet paper should enter the septic system.



Monitor water flow into your system. Excessive water can push solids into your leach lines, creating blockages that cause the system to fail.



Take chemicals to a local household hazardous waste collection facility (www.wastefreesd.org) instead of dumping down the drain. This includes cleaners, bleach, and unused medication. Do not use chemical additives as septic systems do not require any additional chemicals to function properly.



Regularly pump your tank with a licensed septic pumping professional. How often you pump depends on the size of your tank and the number of people in your household. Consult with a professional to determine your household's ideal pumping frequency. For general estimates, see reverse.

Pumping Frequency (in years)

Septic Tank Size	Household Size – Number of Occupants									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1000 gallon	12	5½	3½	2½	2	1½	1	1	1	1
1250 gallon	15½	7½	4½	3	2½	2	1½	1	1	1
1500 gallon	19	9	6	4	3	2½	2	2	1½	1
2000 gallon	25	12	8	6	4½	3½	3	2½	2	2

Consult with a professional to determine your household's ideal pumping frequencies.

Addressing Failures A failure can be identified by:



Pools of sewage on the ground by the leach field or septic tank



Patches of unusually green or fast-growing vegetation above the leach field

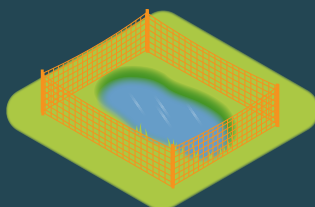


Slow draining pipes or pipes that backup into the home

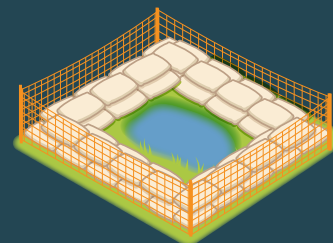
If you notice any of these signs of septic system failure, call a professional immediately for help and to avoid further problems follow these tips until help arrives:



Use as little water as possible until the repair is made



Prevent people or animals from coming in contact with the contaminated area by roping or fencing it off



Prevent contaminated water from leaving the site by placing barriers such as sandbags around the affected area



Water that is released to the streets, gutters, and storm drains in San Diego County IS NOT TREATED before it reaches our local creeks, rivers, and the ocean. All sources of pollution, including discharges from septic systems, are prohibited from leaving your property and entering streets or storm drains. Only rainwater is allowed in the streets and storm drains.



For More Information

Septic information and technical questions:

(858) 565-5173

www.sandiegocounty.gov/deh/septic

Watershed Protection Program's Septic Rebate Program:

www.sandiegocounty.gov/WatershedRebates and click on Septic Rebate Program