

Environment, Health & Safety

Your Septic Tank: Properly Maintained?

(NAPS)—If your septic tank failed, or you know someone whose did, you are not alone. The U.S. Bureau of Census reported that at least 10 percent of septic systems failed in the previous year. Some communities report failure rates as high as 70 percent.

Septic systems serve approximately 25 percent of U.S. households, and one in every three new homes built today uses these systems.

Here are ten simple steps you can take to keep your septic system working properly.

1. Locate your septic tank and drainfield. Keep a drawing of these locations in your records.

2. Have your septic system inspected at least every three years.

3. Pump your septic tank as needed (generally every three to five years).

4. Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.

5. Keep other household items, such as dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, and cat litter out of your system.

6. Use water efficiently.

7. Plant only grass over and near your septic system. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs might clog and damage the system.

8. Keep vehicles off your septic system. The weight can damage the pipes and tank, and your system may not drain properly under compacted soil.



The EPA suggests you have your septic system inspected at least every three years.

9. Keep gutters and basement sump pumps from draining into or near your septic system.

10. Check with your local health department before using additives. Commercial septic tank additives do not eliminate the need for periodic pumping and can be harmful to your system.

“Proper septic system maintenance is a commonly overlooked responsibility. Failing systems are a significant threat to our health and our water quality. Homeowners can make a real difference by following a few simple guidelines,” says U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Assistant Administrator, G. Tracy Mehan.

For more information on septic system maintenance, visit www.epa.gov/owm/septic