



Helpful Hints for Septic Systems



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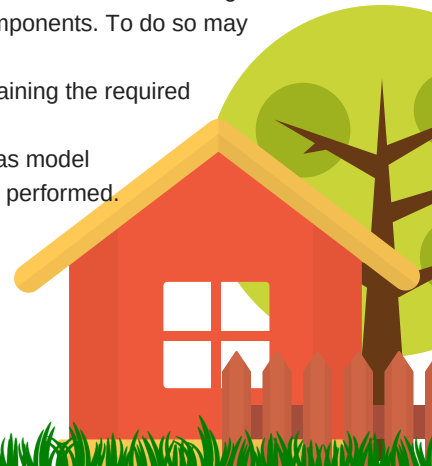
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The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) recommends the following:

- Septic systems should not be treated as normal city sewer -- water conservation is important.
- Since it is not practical for the average homeowner to inspect the septic tank to determine the need for cleaning, a regular schedule of cleaning the tank at three to five year intervals should be established. Commercial cleaners are equipped to readily perform the cleaning operations. Owners of septic systems shall engage only persons registered with the TCEQ to transport the septic tank sludge.
- Septic tanks should be cleaned before sludge accumulates to a point where it approaches the bottom of the outlet baffle. If sludge or scum accumulates to this point, solids will leave the tank with the liquid and possibly cause clogging of the perforations in the drainfield lines resulting in sewage surfacing or backing up into the house through the plumbing fixtures.
- Vehicle and heavy livestock traffic over a septic system can cause damage to the system.
- It is important to keep groundcover growing and mowed over the drainfield. Good groundcover prevents uphill drainage from eroding the soil off the drainfield pipes leading to surfacing effluent and the groundcover aids in absorption of the effluent. Keeping the grass mowed allows proper evaporation and drying of the drainfield.
- If the effluent is disbursed by spray heads, keep vegetation trimmed low within the entire radius of the spray heads.
- Keep deep-rooted vegetation away from the septic system. Tree roots can clog tanks and drainfield pipes and interfere with the spray radius of spray heads.
- Your system is designed to treat only human waste/sewage.
- Normal household soaps, detergents, bleach, and cleaning agents will not impair system functioning. However, moderation should be exercised in the use of such materials.
- The excess use of in-sink garbage grinders and discarding of grease should be avoided.
- In-sink garbage grinders can cause a rapid buildup of sludge or scum resulting in a need for more frequent cleaning and possible system failure.
- Do not use the toilet to dispose of cleaning tissues, cigarette butts, or other trash.
- This disposal practice will waste water and impose an undesired solids load on the treatment system.
- Do not build driveways, storage building, pool, or other structures over the tanks or disposal field.
- Chemical additives or so-called enzymes are not necessary for the operation of a septic tank. Some of these additives may even be harmful to the tanks operation.
- It is not advisable to allow a water softener to back flush into any portion of the OSSF. Heavy concentration of salts causes erosion of system components and kills helpful bacteria.
- The liquid form of OSSF is still heavily laden with bacteria. The surfacing of this liquid constitutes a health hazard to those that might come into contact with it.
- Installing a sprinkler system over a drainfield can cause hydraulic overload leading to failure.
- State law requires that an aerobic system be maintained at all times under a service contract offered by a licensed service provider. The owner/service provider are required to file the service contract and quarterly inspection reports with the governing authority in a timely manner.
- Do keep your system accessible for inspections and pumping, yet protect it from unauthorized entrance. If access to your system is locked, make sure that your service contractor has a key.
- Use ONLY septic chlorine in the aerobic system. DO NOT USE SWIMMING POOL CHLORINE.
- Call a service professional whenever you experience problems with your system, the alarm is activated, or whenever there are signs of system failure. Don't attempt to clean or perform maintenance, or make any adjustments to any system components. To do so may endanger your health, and may void your warranty.
- Don't make or allow unauthorized repairs or changes to your system, or additions to your home without obtaining the required health department permits.
- Do keep detailed records about your system, including a map of where it is, and general information, such as model name, capacity, state license, date installed, service agreement, records of service visits, and maintenance performed.
- Don't turn your aerobic system off for any reason, unless instructed by your service provider.
- Do divert other sources of water, like roof drains, house footing drains and sump pumps away from the system. The system is not designed to handle any flows other than your household sewage.
- By law, the only household water that may be diverted off the septic system is washer machine water. This water, called greywater, must be discharged through a flexible plastic hose with a lint trap on the end. The discharge/greywater must not leave the property nor create a nuisance.



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WATER CONSERVATION

- Showers usually use less water than baths. Install water saving showerheads that use less than 2.5 gallons per minute. This saves both water and energy.
- If you take a tub bath, reduce the level of water in the tub from the level to which you customarily fill it.
- Leaky faucets and faulty toilet fill-up mechanisms should be repaired as quickly as possible.
- Check toilets for leaks that may not be apparent by adding a few drops of food coloring to the tank. Do not flush. If the color appears in the bowl within a few minutes, the toilet fill or ball cock valve needs to be adjusted to prevent water from overflowing the standpipe, or the flapper at the bottom of the toilet tank needs to be replaced.
- Reduce the amount of water used for flushing the toilet by installing one of the following: a new 1.6-gallon toilet; a toilet tank dam; or filling and capping a one-quart plastic bottle with water and lowering into the tank. Do not use bricks since they may crumble and cause damage to the fixture.
- Try to run the dishwasher with a full load, whenever possible.
- Avoid running the water continuously for brushing teeth, washing hands, and rinsing kitchen utensils or for cleaning vegetables.
- To reduce water consumption, use low flow faucet aerators that restrict flow.
- Keep a container of drinking water in the refrigerator instead of running the faucet until the water turns cool.
- Insulate all hot water pipes to avoid long delays of wasted water while waiting for the heated water.
- Ask your city, county or local government about their programs to conserve water and how they can help you save water.

DO NOT FLUSH ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS INTO YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM:

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| Coffee Grounds | • Lint, Hair |
| Kitty Litter | • Beer |
| Cigarette Butts | • Waste Cloth Towels, Rags |
| Scouring Pads | • Cornhusks |
| Sticks, Leaves | • Paper Towels |
| Sanitizers | • Paints, Solvents, Varnishes, Thinners |
| Dental Floss | • Chemicals |
| Sanitary Napkins, Tampons, Condoms | • Egg Shells |
| Mop Strings | • Matches |
| Septic Tank Additives | • Pesticides |
| "Tidy Bowl" Products | • Photographic Solutions |
| Disinfectants | • Plumbing Cleaners |
| Fats, Grease, or Oils | • Facial Tissue |
| Diapers of Any Kind | • Dirt, Mud, Grit, Sand |
| Baby Wipes | • Latex, Rubber, or Plastics |
| Gauze, Bandages | |

Governing Authorities

Bastrop County 512-581-7176
 Burnet County 512-756-5420
 City of Austin 512-469-2015
 City of Bee Caves 512-263-2151
 City Mustang Ridge 512-243-1775
 City of Westlake 512-327-3628

Caldwell County 512-398-1803
 Hays County 512-393-2150
 LCRA 512-473-3200
 TNRCC 512-239-1000
 Travis Co. 512-854-9383
 Williamson Co. 512-930-4390



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