

WHY SHOULD I MAINTAIN MY SYSTEM?



COST!

Failing septic systems are expensive to repair or replace. It typically costs between \$10,000 to \$20,000 or more to replace a failing system.



GROUNDWATER PROTECTION!

98% of the county's drinking water comes from groundwater. Improperly working septic systems may contaminate groundwater.

MAINTENANCE

The owner of an on-site septic system is responsible for properly operating, monitoring, and maintaining the system to reduce the risk of failure. To accomplish this, the owner must have the septic system inspected by a certified specialist as required per Clark County Code (CCC 24.17).

Type of system	Frequency of inspection
All alternative systems & All food establishments	Yearly
Pressure distribution	Every 2 years
Simple gravity	Every 3 years
All systems	Within one year of the home date of sale

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ON-SITE SEPTIC SYSTEMS

About 35,000 Clark County homes dispose of wastewater through on-site septic systems. Unlike public sewer systems, septic systems require routine maintenance by homeowners.

IN NEED OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE?

Visit clark.wa.gov/public-health/financial-aid-site-sewage-systems or scan the QR code below.



LOOKING FOR CERTIFIED INSPECTORS?

Visit clark.wa.gov/public-health/property-owners or scan the QR code below.



CONTACT US

Phone
564.397.8000

Website
clark.wa.gov/public-health/site-septic-systems



For other formats, contact the Clark County ADA Office
Voice 564.397.2322 / Relay 711 or 800.833.6388
Fax 360.397.6165 / Email ADA@clark.wa.gov

ON-SITE SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

A guide to the proper care and maintenance of your on-site septic system



CLARK COUNTY WASHINGTON

PUBLIC HEALTH
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



WHAT TO EXPECT

Routine inspections of on-site septic systems should be performed by certified operation and maintenance specialists. Visit the Clark County Public Health website for a list of certified professionals.

During the inspection, the specialist will determine if all the components of the septic system are properly working and/or need cleaning (e.g. pumps, filter, floats, pressure lines, drain field, etc.). The specialist will also verify the need for septic tank pumping. This will be determined by measuring the depth of septic sludge and scum in the septic tank. Inspection results are submitted electronically to the Clark County On-site Septic program by the specialist.

HOW SEPTIC SYSTEMS WORKS

THE SEPTIC TANK

Retains solids inside the tank to prevent solids entering and clogging the drainfield.

Anaerobic bacteria slowly breakdown solids.

Two layers form within the tank.

- Scum Layer: Composed of fats, oils, greases and other materials less dense than water.
- Sludge Layer: Composed of materials more dense than water.

Over time the solids level increases, allowing solids to enter into the drainfield, resulting in damage to the field and the need for extensive repairs.

Pumping is recommended when 50% of tanks volume is comprised of solid material.

THE SOIL DRAINFIELD

The drainfield is located underground in an unsaturated soil area on your property.

The field consists of a series of underground pipes installed in a layer of washed gravel, or a series of plastic chamber units.

The sewage is distributed, stored, and ultimately applied to the soil for treatment.

After filtering through the soil, the treated sewage enters the groundwater level for final disposal.

DO'S & DON'TS

DO

- Learn the location of your septic system, drainfield and reserve area, and keep a sketch of it with the maintenance records.
- Have your septic tank inspected by a certified operations and maintenance specialist.
- Keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumping. Install risers if necessary.
- Keep detailed records of all maintenance activities.
- Conserve water to avoid overloading the system.
- Divert other sources of water (roof drains, house footing drains, sump pumps) away from system.
- Contact a professional when you experience problems with your system.
- Follow label instructions of household cleaners

DON'T

- Don't enter a septic tank; toxic gases are produced in the tank that can be deadly within minutes.
- Don't drive, park, or do any activity that will compact the soil on top of the system.
- Don't plant anything over or near the drainfield except grass.
- Don't dig into the drainfield or cover it with any hard surface or building.
- Don't repair your system without a required permit from Clark County Public Health.
- Don't use septic tank additives.
- Don't use your system as a trash can for any non-biodegradable substance.