

# SANDERS COUNTY

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



### Homeowner Information:

You have made a large investment here is some information on how to get the maximum life out of your new system. Your septic system has four basic parts: your home (the source), the septic tank, the drainfield and the soil beneath the drainfield. Taking care of all of these can assure you getting up to 25-30 years of trouble free use. Septic systems require routine maintenance. The septic tanks purpose is to stop solids from entering the drainfield. Solids decompose, but not entirely, resulting in sludge that builds up in your tank over time. If this sludge is allowed to build up too high, these sludge solids will flow into the drainfield. Solids can clog the small spaces in the gravel and soil below, which can result in sewage surfacing in your yard or backing up into your home. Septic tank maintenance is the key to preventing septic failures. Make sure you pull the filter and hose it off every year. You should also have your tank pumped every 3 to 5 years, depending on use. Check **Table 1** for your tank size and # in household to determine how often to pump. Garbage disposals are very hard on your septic system (best advice is to not have one), you will need to pump your tank more frequently. We do not recommend adding any additives to your septic tank as there is no proven data to show any beneficial effect on your system. Your normal waste supplies all the bacteria your system requires.

### Hints In Preventing Failures:

**1 Effluent filters** located within your septic tank should be taken out, inspected and hosed off once a year. Remember when removing the filter be sure and check for arrows or markings to reline the filter back in its correct location for proper function .



**2 Conserve** - using water-saving fixtures can dramatically save your drainfield. They will reduce the amount of wastewater the soil has to absorb from your kitchen, bath , & laundry. Also fix any leaky fixtures immediately.

**3 Pump** your tank regularly. Every 3—5 years depending on use.

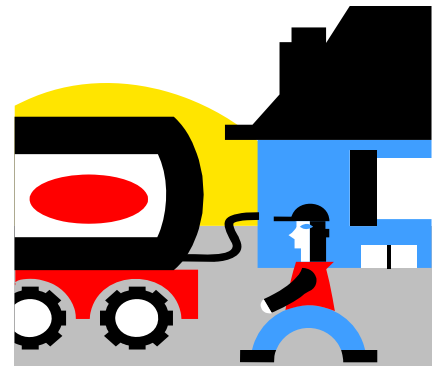
**4 Do not** flush feminine hygiene products, diapers, kitty litter, cigarette filters, cooking oil, or grease, dispose of these into your trash. Garbage disposals should not be used, your system is not designed to take care of food garbage.

**5 Use** liquid laundry detergents, rather than powder.

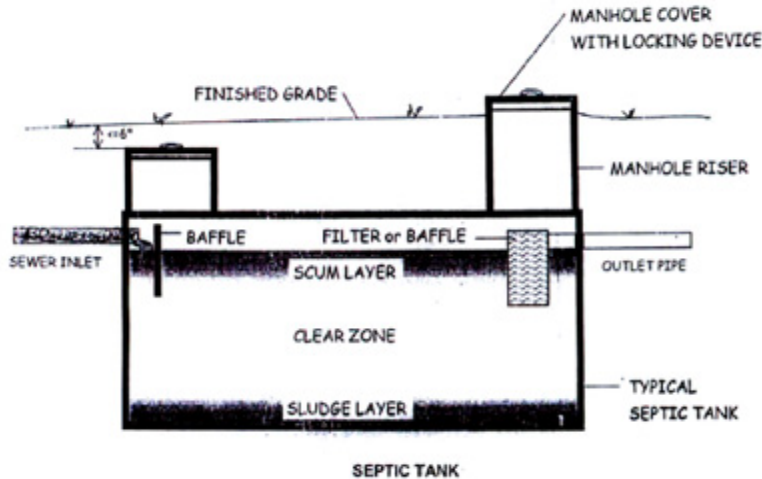
**6 Minimize** the amount of household cleaning chemicals, bleach in laundry, paint, motor oil, gasoline, solvents, and other such substances . These can kill all the beneficial bacteria in your tank and soil. Many of these can be disposed of at your local transfer station.

**Table 1. Estimated Septic Tank Pumping in Years**

TANK SIZE (GALS)	HOUSEHOLD SIZE (number of people)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1000	12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2.	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.7
1500	18.9	9.1	5.9	4.2	3.3	2.6	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.3
2000	25.4	12.4	8.0	5.9	4.5	3.7	3.1	2.6	2.2	2.0
2500	31.9	15.6	10.2	7.5	5.9	4.8	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.6



## Basic Septic Tank Diagram



“A septic tank system will serve a home satisfactorily only if it is properly designed, installed, and adequately maintained. Even a good system which does not have proper care and attention may become a nuisance and a burdensome expense. Remember, a septic tank-soil absorption system which does not function properly frequently becomes a neighborhood health hazard. To obtain satisfactory service, the homeowner must know something about the design, operation and maintenance of his own septic tank system.”

- United States Department of Health, Education & Welfare Public Health Service

## Driveways and Parking lots:

Is your driveway between your house and your septic system in any way?? Maybe your septic tank and or drainfield are across your property with your driveway in the middle. Be sure and check with your county sanitarian and septic installer on having the transfer pipes going under you driveway properly sleeved. Weight load and freezing could result in broken pipes if not installed correctly, in turn creating failure to your septic system, expense, and hassle in getting it repaired. Another thing to remember: where is your drainfield?? Do not make a parking lot over your drainfield or build on it. This will cause damage that will result in drainfield failure. Instead consider planting grass or Colorado Blue Spruce trees alongside it. Some gardens (not vegetable) can be planted over a drainfield. Plants will help take up moisture.

## Warning Signs TO Watch

1. An area over the drainfield that is damp or swampy more often than any other similar areas.
2. “Ponding” or a small area of standing water. This will usually have distinctive “sewage” smell.
3. Slow flowing drains or backup- lines may just need to be snaked, or it may indicate a larger problem.



## UNUSED SINKS & DRAINS

All drains should have a trap built into the plumbing that prevents sewer gases from flowing back into the house. These drains rely on water being in them in order to function. If you have sinks or floor drains that are rarely used, make sure to periodically pour some water down them to maintain that block, especially if you smell sewer gas.

