

Proper Septic Maintenance

The purpose of regular scheduled maintenance on a septic system is to remove the sludge and solids from the tank so that the water that eventually travels to the leaching field is as clear and as clean as possible.

One of the most often asked question is "how often should the tank be pumped?" The answer to that really depends on what type of system is in use, how old is the system, how hard is the system being used, how many people are on the system, is the garbage disposal used regularly, etc.

So when someone calls and asks if the system might be in need of pumping these are the first questions we ask.

The type of system will determine how often a service/inspection is needed. A system which has several components, like pumps, filters, doublers, jetters, etc., will need to be serviced and/or inspected on a very regular basis to ensure that all the components are functioning properly. These systems are typically engineered systems and most often do have alarms which will alert the home owner when the level in the tank gets too high. The problem is that sometimes the alarms fail and/or the owner isn't aware that the alarm is telling them something and then there is a huge mess to clean up. If the owner ensures that the system is on a regular schedule for service or inspection with their pumper all of the components, including the alarm can be inspected and hopefully any problems can be averted.

A typical gravity system will not require an annual inspection, but certainly need to be on a regularly scheduled service to remove the sludge and solids.

The age of the system will often determine how often a service is needed. The older the system the more often it will need to be serviced. The reason being is that over the years a bio-mat forms on the bottom and the sides of the leaching field. The bio-mat is from the bacteria and particles that are suspended in the effluent water and float out into the leaching field naturally. The bio-mat actually becomes another level of filtration for the effluent water as it flows back into the ground water. However, as the bio-mat grows and thickens it becomes harder and harder for the water to filter through, kind of a catch 22 when you think about it. The life expectancy of a "normal" gravity fed leaching field is approximately 20-30 years. Some last longer, some do not last as long. After that there is a need to either expand the field or create another one. The options available to you will depend on a

lot of other factors.

The number of people in a home and the use of a garbage disposal will dictate how often a tank needs to be pumped. Reason being, more people, more waste water. As a rule of thumb when a garbage disposal is used it's like adding 2 additional people to the system. A garbage disposal puts raw material down into the system that the bacteria needs to break down. Human waste has already gone through the first initial breakdown internally.

We tell people that as a rule of thumb if there are 4 people in the house and the tank is a 1250 gallon capacity tank you would want to schedule it to be pumped approximately every 2-3 years. Less people, the tank can probably go longer. More people, the tank probably needs to be serviced more often. If the tank is smaller, more often, larger, less often. An engineered system regardless of size needs to be inspected (maybe not pumped, but at least inspected) every year.

Give us a call; we'll put you on the proper schedule for your usage.