

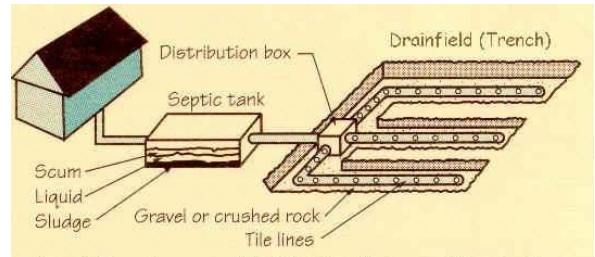
Your septic system is your responsibility!

Did you know that as a homeowner you're responsible for maintaining your septic system? Did you know that maintaining your septic system protects your investment in your home? Did you know that you should periodically inspect your system and pump out your septic tank?

How does it work?

A typical septic system has three main components:

- **The Septic Tank** — A septic tank's purpose is to separate solids from the wastewater, store and partially decompose as much solid material as possible, while allowing the liquid (or effluent) to go to the drainfield.
- **The Drainfield** — After solids settle in the septic tank, the liquid wastewater (or effluent) is discharged to the drainfield, also known as an absorption or leach field.
- **The Soil** — The soil below the drainfield provides the final treatment and disposal of the septic tank effluent. After the wastewater has passed into the soil, organisms in the soil treat the effluent before it percolates downward and outward, eventually entering ground or surface water. The type of soil impacts the effectiveness of the drainfield; for instance, clay soils may be too tight to allow much wastewater to pass through and gravelly soil may be too coarse to provide much treatment.



How do I maintain my septic system?

1. **Pump frequently:** You should have a typical septic system pumped and inspected at least every 3 years by a professional. With proper care, a system should last 20 years or more.
Garbage disposals place additional stress on your system and require more frequent pumping.
Products that claim to increase the performance of disposal fields do not reduce the need to regularly remove solids from the septic tank by pumping.
2. **Understand your system:** Learn the location of your septic system. Keep a sketch of it with your maintenance record for service visits. Mark the location with a stake or stone that is not likely to be moved.
3. **Use water efficiently:** Install low-flow or dual-flow faucets, showers, and toilets. Use high efficiency appliances, such as front-loading washers. Spread clothes-washing over the entire week and avoid sudden overloads to the system. Repair dripping faucets and leaky toilets, which can waste more than 2000 gallons of water each year.
4. **Flush responsibly:** Dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, cat litter, paper towels, and other kitchen and bathroom items can clog and potentially damage septic system components.
Flushing household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze, and paint can stress or destroy the biological treatment taking place in the system. Use bleach disinfectants, anti-bacterial soaps, and commercial bathroom cleaners in moderation as they destroy the biological activity within the system.
5. **Plant sensibly:** Plant only grass over and near your septic system. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs might clog and damage the drainfield. Don't drive or park vehicles on any part of your septic system as doing so can compact the soil in your drainfield or damage the pipes, tank, or other septic system components. Design landscaping to divert rainwater and drains from the septic drainfield since a soggy drainfield won't absorb and neutralize liquid waste.

Why should I maintain my septic system?

One key reason to maintain your septic system is to save money! Failing septic systems are expensive to repair or replace, and poor maintenance is often the culprit. Your system will need pumping every few years, depending on how many people live in the house and the size of the system. To sell your home, your septic system must be in good working order.

Other good reasons for safe treatment of sewage include preventing the spread of infection and disease and protecting groundwater that might be a source of drinking water. Typical pollutants in household wastewater can cause communicable diseases through direct or indirect body contact or ingestion of contaminated water. If a septic system is working properly, it will effectively remove most of these pollutants.

How do I know if my septic system is failing?

Any of the following could be symptoms of a failing system or one in need of pumping: Sewage backup in drains or toilets; Slow flushing toilets, sinks or drains; Visible liquid on the surface of the ground near the septic system, with or without an odor; Lush green grass over the drain field, even during dry weather, which indicates that an excessive amount of liquid from the system is moving up through the soil, instead of downward, as it should; Unpleasant odors around your house.

Where can I go for more information?

Stop by the Franklin Township Municipal Building to obtain a pamphlet on maintaining your system and to register your system. Contact the Franklin Township Board of Health, Franklin Township Environmental Commission, or Hunterdon County Health Department for additional information.