

HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO SEPTIC TANK SYSTEM

An individual sewage disposal system (septic tank system) consists of two parts: the septic tank and the drainfield (absorption field) line. The septic tank is usually constructed of concrete. It receives all sewage from the house or building and retains it for approximately 24 hours. After treatment in the tank, the solids remain in the tank and the liquid portion goes into the drainfield, which is probably the most critical part of the septic tank system. The drainfield distributes the liquid to the soil for absorption and final biological treatment.

Septic system installation

State rules and regulations govern septic tank use and installation. The local health department enforces these regulations. A permit from this department is required prior to the construction of a new system. The system may not be covered with earth until an inspection is made and approval given by the health department. A permit is also required if a system malfunctions and repair work is needed, or if the homeowner requests the system be re-located due to the construction of a swimming pool, garage, addition to house, etc.

Care of the system

Only household waste and toilet tissue should be disposed of via the septic tank system. Keep kitchen greases, sanitary items, cigarette butts, etc., out of the system.

Plumbing should be properly maintained. A leaking faucet or toilet, no matter how small the leak, will eventually result in complete saturation and failure of the absorption field.

Septic tanks need periodic cleaning or pumping out of the accumulated solids. The frequency of pumping is hard to determine as it depends on many factors and varies with different families. The health department recommends that tanks be pumped every 3-5 years. The health department has a list of septic tank pumpers who have the proper equipment to do the job and an approved site to dispose of the waste.

Automobiles, heavy equipment or impervious surfaces should not be allowed over the septic system.

This department has no documentation that indicates that any presently known chemical, yeast, bacteria, enzyme, or other additive product will improve the operation or life expectancy of a septic tank system.

The State of Georgia adopted new septic tank regulations on February 20, 1998. Effective August 20, 1998, all new septic tanks installed must have an approved filter installed at the outlet of the tank. These filters will need to be serviced on a timely basis to prevent clogging.