

Septic Tank Pumping

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One of the primary ways to keep your septic system in proper operating condition and to increase the longevity of the system is to pump the tank on a regular basis. Most systems consist of a septic tank and lateral field. The purpose of the tank is to protect and increase the life of the laterals.

The septic tank is designed to capture and hold onto the solids that are flushed from your home. Most solids sink to the bottom of the tank. This material is called sludge. Materials such as hair, grease, and soap products are lighter and float to the surface. This is called scum. The middle band of liquid in the tank is the cleanest and the tank is designed so that effluent from that cleanest layer of the tank is what goes out to the lateral field.

As the sludge deepens and the scum thickens, that clean layer gets smaller and the quality of effluent going to your laterals decreases. As the effluent gets poorer in quality, it puts a strain on the soil to filter and treat the effluent. Eventually, it will lead to plugging of the soil and lateral failure. Since laterals are quite expensive to install and digging makes a mess of the yard, it is better not to ever have to do that a second time.

Regular pumping of the tank will help keep a good quality of effluent going to the field. Pumping does depend upon how many people live in the home. But a good rule of thumb is to pump your tank about every three to five years. This is a good insurance policy for lateral protection. The old adage that a tank that's working never needs pumped never was true. With today's bigger use of water and the availability of lots more household products tanks are under a greater strain than ever to keep all the solids in the tank.

In the past, lots of farmers had pumper wagons for hog confinements, etc. and it was no problem to find someone who would pump your tank. Today, fewer farmers will do that. Also, State law now requires that all septic tank pumping contractors must be licensed by the State, must submit manure management plans for disposal of the sewage, etc. Consequently, fewer individuals do this work. This office can supply you with a list of area contractors that you can contact to do the pumping.

Another point of which you should be aware: **The use of septic tank additives is greatly discouraged due to the counter productivity of their actions.** Ads for additives tout their ability to clean out the tank. But this material does not miraculously disappear. In fact, for those few additives that even do what they profess to do, they are harming your lateral field by passing all that gunk into the laterals and plugging up the soil structure. For that reason, virtually all on-site experts recommend that additives not be used. Save your money and pump the tank when it is needed.