

Resources



For information around inspections –

Dane County Environmental Health

2701 International Lane, Suite 204
Madison, WI
608-242-6515

Also, here are some websites that you may find helpful:

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

http://www.epa.gov/owm/septic/pubs/homeowner_guide_long.pdf

National Environmental Services Center

http://www.nesc.wvu.edu/pdf/ww/septic/pl_fall04.pdf

These are just a sampling of what is available on the web. Feel free to explore these sites or call a septic service provider if your questions haven't been answered.

Our goal is simply to give residents maximize the useful life of their septic systems.

Septic Systems The Basics



A Guide for Residents new to Septic Systems

You have moved into a home with a septic system. Perhaps you've only had experience with a municipal waste water system. There are differences and maintenance issues that you as a homeowner now need to address. This pamphlet, sourced from Wisconsin Onsite Waste Disposal Association information, is meant to be a guide through these new responsibilities.

WARNING

NEVER enter a septic tank. The septic tank produces gases which can kill a person in a matter of minutes. Never go into a septic tank to retrieve someone. Call for emergency services and put a fan at the top of the tank to blow in fresh air.

Where does your waste water go? Waste water in a septic system leaves your residence and flows into a holding tank. The holding tank is buried somewhere in your yard, and allows solids to settle out of the material before the liquids are sent out into a drain field.

There are two types of waste water leaving your residence:

- Black water – from toilets and the kitchen sink/garbage disposal area
- Grey water - from washing and cleaning.

The black water contains most of the pathogen loads that go into your septic system.

Not all septic systems are the same. Some are simply a tank and a drain field. Others may include an aeration pretreatment tank, grease trap, baffle filter, pump or siphon chamber, distribution box or sand mound. Most include a pump to move liquid from the tank to the drain field.

Issues that create problems for homeowners, up to and including septic system replacement are:

1 **Overloading**- too much material is sent out into the drain field causing ponding or insufficient time for solid settling causing solids to clog your drain field pipes.

2 **Grease** - Grease is not broken down by the septic system bacteria. Over time, they coat the pipes – slowing the drainage. The reaction may be to dump commercial ‘openers’ down the drain. These are toxic to the bacterial you need to operate your system.

3 **Solids** – Anything not eaten that is a solid will create problems (sanitary napkins, condoms, cotton swabs, dental floss, tampons, hand wipes, infant wipes, disposable diapers, and cigarette filters being a few.) These products are made from cellulose, plastic or other non-biodegradable components. They may plug the lines to the tank, baffles in the tank, lodge in the pump. Avoid sending solids down your septic system.

4. **Chemicals** - Antibiotics, medicines, disinfectants including bleach, painting products, gasoline, oil, degreasers, clog freeing chemicals and pesticides – when disposed of through the septic system, these chemicals may kill septic tank bacterial. It can take several weeks for the bacteria in the septic tank to reestablish. During the re-establishment

of the bacteria, the venting of the system will be malodorous.

5. **Clear water** - Salt brine from water softeners in excessive amounts could have an adverse effect on septic tank bacteria. Sump pumps could overload the system.

6. **Surface drainage** – anything that competes with the ability of the drain field to disperse its load. This could include the ground settling over the newly installed drain field, run off from down spouts, driveways, road ditches or other.

Inspection:

Dane County Environmental Health governs Town of Middleton septic systems. Every third year the system is required to be pumped and inspected. A postcard is mailed to the property owner who is responsible for contacting a qualified septic servicer, having them inspect their system and pump it out.

The cost of the Dane County Fee is included on property taxes – with one third of the fee charged annually.