

10 Money Saving Maintenance Tips to Prolong the Life of Your Septic System

1. Pumping Your Tank

- The greater the number of people using a system, the more frequently it will need to be pumped. For the average 3 bedroom home, it is common for a system to be pumped every 3-4 years.
- It is recommended that tanks be pumped in summer or early fall months. This allows time before the cold winter months for the correct balance of bacteria to re-establish and begin functioning correctly within the system.
- Port openings can be installed for easy access to the septic system for routine check-ups and pumping.

2. Conserve Water

- The greater the amount of flow to a septic system, the faster a septic system will accumulate sludge and need to be pumped.
- Reducing flow can increase longevity of the system.
- Install low flow toilets, showerheads and taps. Fix all leaks.
- Wash full loads of laundry.

3. Spread Water Loading

- Instead of washing four loads of laundry in one day, try washing one or two a day. This prevents loading the system with cleaners high in phosphorous levels.
- If you expect a large crowd, reduce water flow several days before to prevent overloading the system on the day of gathering.

4. Disposal of Solids

- Food products such as fat or grease can accumulate on pipes and eventually clog them. Fats can also accumulate on top of the tank, which can prevent microorganisms from doing their work.
- Food from an in-sink garbage disposal can decrease the life of a system.
- Do not flush sanitary products, condoms, and diapers, which can clog pipes.

5. Disposal of Chemicals

- Do not flush hazardous household products such as paints, solvents, weed killers or nail polish remover into the system. These products can decrease the overall system function.
- Dispose of unused bleaches and cleaners properly and avoid pouring them down the drain.
- Use environmentally friendly cleaning products as alternatives to bleaches, caustic drain openers and other cleaners.

6. Septic System Additives

- Septic system additives, cleaners, or enhancers are NOT beneficial to the system. They destroy the natural microbes that treat the sewage. Use of additives may lead to odours and upwelling of untreated sewage over the leaching field.

7. Divert Water Flow

- The house lot should be graded so that rainwater drains away from the leaching bed.
- Roof drains should be directed away from the disposal field.
- Water from water softeners, hot tubs, Jacuzzis etc. could be diverted to a leaching pit.

8. Landscaping

- Roots from trees and shrubs can interfere with the system. Plant only grass over the septic system and leaching field. Grass prevents erosion and promotes to healthy system function.

9. Septic System Insulation

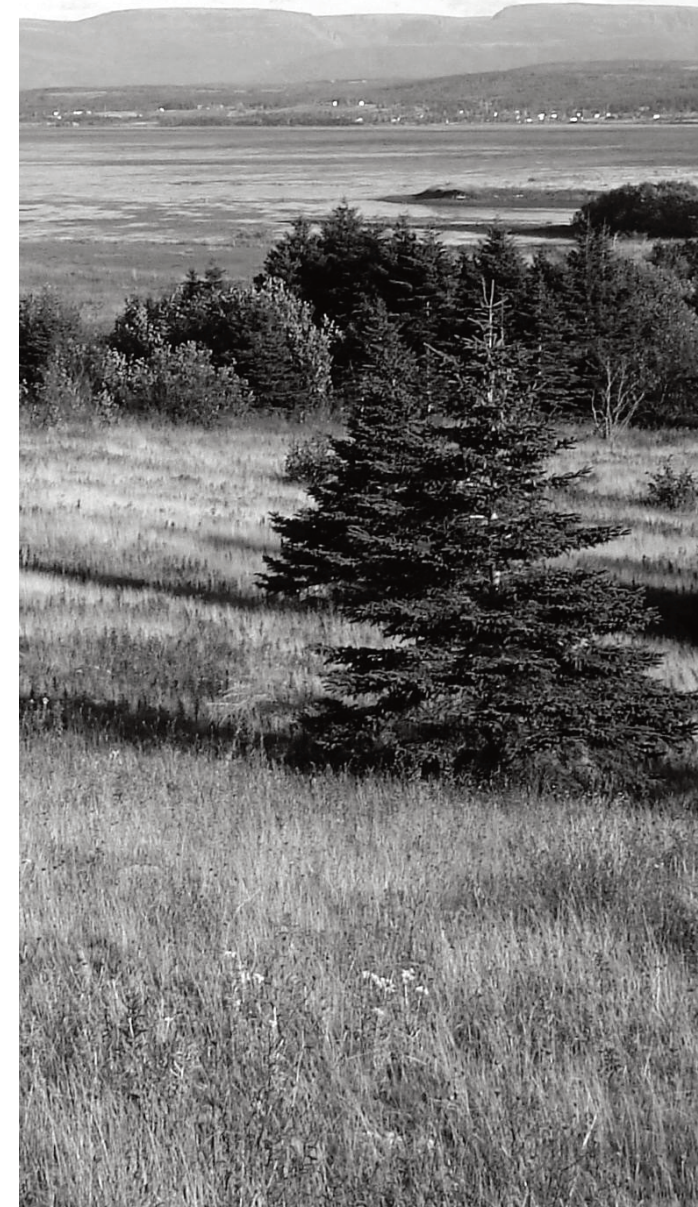
- Insulating your septic system can increase winter performance of the system.

10. Avoid Driving Over the System

- The excess weight from a car, snowmobile or ATV can crack or crush pipes, harming the system function.

Safeguard your family
and home, while
protecting the
environment!

Money Saving Tips for Maintaining Your Septic System



Important Websites

Health and Community Services Act-Sanitation Regulations of NL:
<http://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/regulations/rc960803.htm>

Well Aware Program- Conservation Corps of NL:
<http://www.conservationcorps.nf.ca/wellaware/septic-systems.php>

Your Septic System-Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation: http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/maho/gamare/gemare_009.cfm

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Septic system regulations in Newfoundland and Labrador:

Septic systems are governed by the *Health and Community Services Act* under the *Sanitation Regulations*. *Sanitation Regulations* may be accessed online at:

<http://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/regulations/rc960803.htm>

Who to contact if there is a problem with your septic system:

Contact the local Government Services Division for your area and ask for an inspection of your property from an Environmental Health Officer. The Officer can recommend if pumping is necessary. Contact information for all Government Services Offices are available at: <http://www.gs.gov.nl.ca/gs/gsc/locations.stm>.

Warning signs that your septic system may be FAILING:

- Toilets, shower and sinks back up or take much longer than usual to drain.
- Occasional sewage odours become noticeable, particularly after rainfall.
- Gray or black liquids surface in your yard.
- The ground around the septic system and disposal field is soggy.
- *E. coli* and fecal coliform bacteria are found in nearby well water or surface water close to disposal field.
- The water level in the septic system is higher than the outlet pipe, due to incorrect drainage.
- Wastewater is sitting in the distribution lines.