

## SEPTIC SYSTEMS

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### **WHEN DID YOU LAST CHECK YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM?**

An inefficient septic system could jeopardize the safety of your well. Well owners have a strong vested interest in ensuring that their waste water treatment system and their neighbors' systems are built to code and properly maintained. Because septic systems are out of sight, many homeowners rarely think about them. One-third of all American homes use on-site waste water treatment systems. Waste water can be treated thoroughly and safely using an on-site system, with no sewer connection fee or monthly charge.

Can your septic system cope with peak demands when the family comes to stay? Was your septic system designed for a two bedroom home? Have more rooms been added? Do you ensure that heavy trucks keep off the leach field? Even if the ground is frozen, heavy equipment can damage the distribution pipes. Two other factors can cause problems, especially if the septic system is undersized: ?

#### **Overload**

With overload, waste water gets to the leach field before the settling out of solid waste in the septic tank. As a result, particles clog up the holes in the drain-field pipes and build up extra pressure on the holes that remain open. More flow, through fewer drain holes, produces more liquid than the soils can treat. The result can be contaminants moving to the ground water and the situation may go unnoticed for years.

#### **Maintenance**

If the solid material is not removed from a septic tank the result can be clogging in parts of the drain field. There can be a real risk of environmental degradation, such as nitrates moving to aquifers, streams and lakes.

#### **Cross section view of typical home septic system**

If your septic has not been pumped out in the last five years, NOW is the time to check it. The cost of pumping will vary (usually between \$100 and \$200) according to the volume pumped and the distance of your home from the disposal site.

For more information, the Trust has an information pamphlet, *Septic Systems for Waste Water Disposal*. To order, call (603) 228-5444.

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