

TIPS FOR SEPTIC SYSTEM CARE

Residential and non-residential land uses in North Stonington almost exclusively rely on private, on-site subsurface sewage disposal systems. Proper upkeep and maintenance of a septic system will be inexpensive overtime while extending the life of the system. A sewage disposal system consists of a house sewer line (cast iron or heavy-duty plastic pipe) that conveys sanitary waste from a building structure to a septic tank and a leaching field. If properly maintained, the leaching system and surrounding soils to which the household sanitary wastes are discharged are highly effective for renovating septic wastes.

The following are tips that residential and non-residential owners should consider regarding septic system care and maintenance.

- Secure a copy of your property's septic system permit and site plan from North Stonington's land-use office (860-535-2877 ext. 126) or the Ledge Light Health District (860-448-4882) for future reference. That information is generated when the septic system was originally installed or repaired.
- Knowing the location will save a lot of time and money when it needs to be serviced. Household septic tanks should be pumped out every 3-5 years. Non-residential septic systems depending on, among other things, septic tank size, the amount of wastewater generated, and solids build-up, may need a more frequent pump out. Pumping the septic tank will help prevent sludge and solids from building up and entering the leaching system that can lead to premature failure. Keep a record of maintenance events as reported by the septic tank hauler.
- Newer septic systems (post 2000) may have an effluent filter on the outlet side of the septic tank. That filter, which traps grease and particulates from entering the leach field, should be cleaned by the homeowner or septic tank hauler once per year whether the septic tank is pumped or not. The grease may clog the filter leading to a backup in the house.
- Be careful what you flush down the toilet and sink. Do not flush anything into the septic system except human waste and toilet paper. Never flush cooking oil or grease, and items like non-flushable wipes, paper towels, chemicals or chemical solutions, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cat litter, dental floss, gasoline, pesticides, paint, paint thinners, or pharmaceuticals down the sink or toilet. These products can clog, cause premature failure of the leaching field, and pollute ground water because the leaching system is unable to effectively remove liquid chemicals.
- Do not use septic tank additives claiming to break down sludge and circumvent the need for septic pump outs-these products should be avoided and, in some cases, illegal for use in Connecticut. These products, and other chemicals improperly discharged to the leaching system, are a significant detriment to the physical and biological operation of the septic system, and depending on the chemical ingredients, may pose a risk of ground water pollution. Most residents and business owners in North Stonington rely on private drinking water wells.
- The discharge or breakout of sewage on the surface of the ground is noticeable due to foul septic odors, clumps, or patches of very lush, green grass, where the ground is spongy, and/or a black, greyish colored liquid is oozing from the ground. If you notice any of those conditions, or if you are experiencing plumbing backups or a slow draining sink(s) or toilet(s), you should contact a state-licensed septic system installer to inspect the septic system. If you notice the condition on another property, report it to the health district.
- Poor maintenance practices can lead to the premature failing of the septic system. Replacing the septic system is very costly! The average cost of repairing a septic system may range from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

Properly caring for and maintaining your septic system is prudent and an investment that extends the life of the septic system thereby preventing premature failure and costly repair. Should you have any questions regarding the guidance, feel free to contact Bill Warzecha at the WPCA-phone number 860-535-2877 ext. 126 on Thursdays from 8 am till 1:30 pm.