

Septic Systems and Flooding

Because they are located belowground, septic systems may not always be a homeowner's first concern during a flood (out of sight, out of mind). However, during a flood or period of severe wet weather, wastewater (and sewage) from your septic system can back up into your house because the water is unable to drain from the septic tank to the drainfield due to saturated soil conditions. Warning signs that a septic system is not functioning properly may include a slow flushing/draining toilet, slow running drains throughout the house, odors, or water beginning to backup into basement floor drains.

During a flood

- As contradictory as it may sound, do NOT pump your septic system during times of flooding or saturated conditions. Hydrostatic pressure from the saturated soil can cause empty septic tanks to become buoyant and pop out of the ground. This can lead to costly damage of the inlet and outlet pipes and create an additional risk for you and your family.
- Because the water in the drainfield has nowhere to go, all additional water that goes down a drain and into the septic system will make a bad problem worse. It is important to have a plan to reduce water use in your home. It's better to skip a day of showering than having to deal with sewage backflow into your basement!
- Do NOT pump water from your sump pit into your septic system.

After a flood

- If you suspect flooding damaged your septic system, have it professionally inspected.

Who to Contact?

Butler County
Stormwater District
Make a pollution complaint.
<http://stormwaterdistrict.org/>
info@stormwaterdistrict.org
513-785-4120

Butler County Dept of Health
Find a licensed and registered septic contractor.
Make a complaint about an unregistered contractor.
<http://health.bcoho.us/>
BOH@butlercountyohio.org
513-863-1770

Butler Soil and Water
Conservation District
Questions about soils and drainage
<https://www.butlerswcd.org/>
ButlerSWCD@ButlerCountyOhio.org
513-887-3720

Ohio Environmental Protection
Agency
Permit information and homeowner fact sheets.
<https://epa.ohio.gov/>

Ohio Dept. of Health
Information for homeowners and renters on the care of septic systems. Also contains information for contractors.
<https://odh.ohio.gov>

Septic Systems & Stormwater



Protect your health
&
water quality

What is a Septic System

A septic system is your very own on-site sewage treatment solution. The septic tank holds wastewater long enough to allow solids to settle to the bottom. The liquids then exit the tank to a series of perforated pipes that slowly release the wastewater into the soil, commonly called a drainfield. Harmful bacteria, viruses, and nutrients are treated as the water percolates through the soil. When properly installed and maintained, septic systems help protect public health and water quality.

Septic Systems & Stormwater

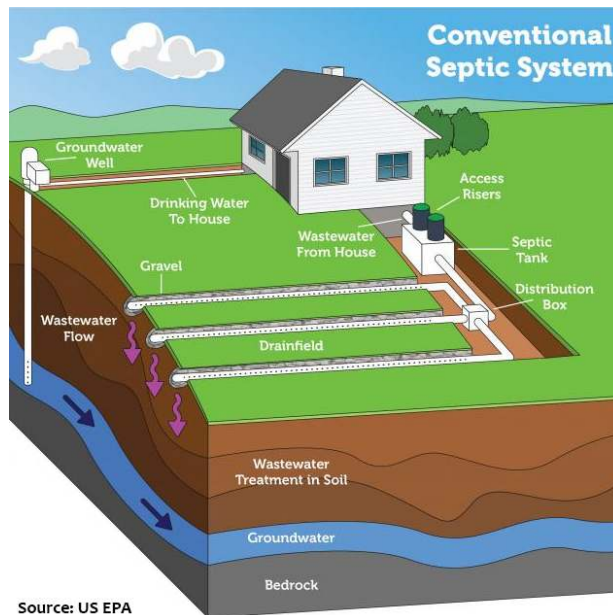
Poorly maintained septic systems may leak and release an overload of nutrients and pathogens (bacteria and viruses), which can harm the environment and create public health problems.

Saturated drainfields or a limited tank capacity might cause septic system overload and slow or stop the treatment of wastewater. Septic waste can back up into a building or discharge to the ground's surface.

Septic waste that is released to the surface can come into contact with stormwater, and contaminate surface waters such as lakes, rivers, and streams. It can choke them with mats of algae and aquatic vegetation, cause fish kills, and make people recreating in the water sick.

Telltale Signs of Septic System Issues

A few signs that a septic system requires maintenance may include wastewater backing up into household drains, a strong odor around the septic tank and drainfield, and bright green, spongy grass appearing on the drainfield, even during dry weather.



Source: US EPA

The property owner is responsible for making sure the septic tank is properly installed and maintained

Tips for a Healthy Septic System

Maintenance: Have your system inspected every three years by a registered or licensed contractor. Have the tank pumped as recommended by the inspector, generally every three to five years. Alternative systems with electrical float switches, pumps, or mechanical components should be inspected more often, generally once a year.

Don't Sterilize It! Ensure the products you use in your home, such as dish soap and toilet paper are safe for septic systems. Beneficial bacteria are one of the keys to a healthy septic system; anything you put down the drain that kills bacteria also harms your septic system.

- Limit your use of harsh chemicals and antibacterial products such as bleach, ammonia, and drain cleaners.
- Clear clogged drains with a plunger, boiling water, or a drain snake.

Don't Treat it Like a Trash Can: It is also important to note that a septic system is not designed to treat oils and greases. Those solidify and can cause a septic tank malfunction.

- Avoid garbage disposals, as they allow the addition of extra solids to your septic tank, which leads to your tank needing to be pumped more frequently.
- Do not flush non-degradable products, such as diapers, flushable wipes, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, cat litter, paper towels, pharmaceuticals, etc.

Don't overload or damage the drain field:

- Keep roof drains, sump pumps, and other drainage systems away from the drainfield.
- Keep the drainfield clear of trees and shrubs to avoid damage from roots.
- Do not park or drive vehicles on any part of the septic system.
- Don't place anything heavy on the ground where your septic tank or drainfield is buried, like a shed or pool. The weight can damage the system and/or piping.

Limit Water Usage: Your septic tank can only handle a limited amount of water at once, as it needs time to separate the solids and liquids. Some ways to conserve water are:

- Fix leaky toilets and faucets.
- Install water efficient toilets, showerheads, and faucet aerators.
- Don't run continuous loads of laundry. Spread it out over a few days to give your tank a chance to recover.