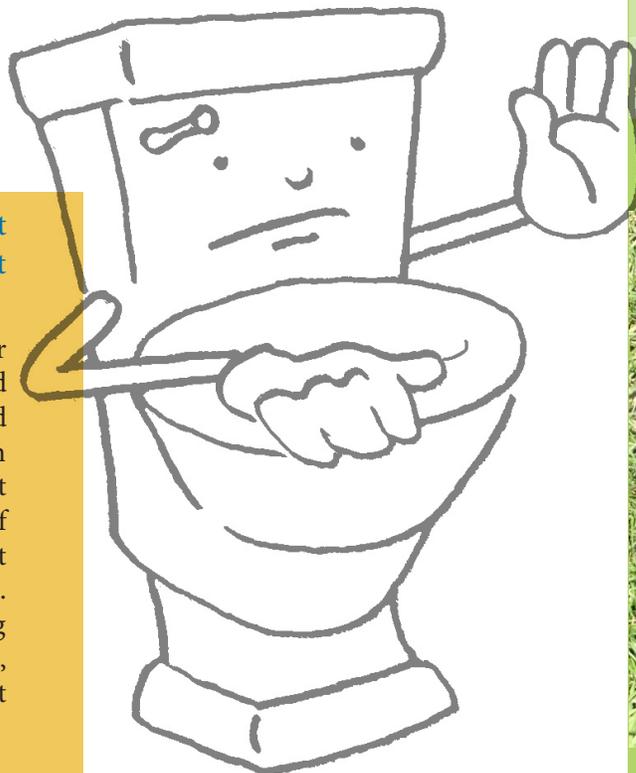


What to Know Before You Go!

Livingston County Health Department
Environmental Health Division
2300 E. Grand River Ave.
Howell, MI 48843
(517) 546-9858

It's not easy to know what's going on internally in a septic system, but it isn't pretty when the system breaks down. Paying attention to clues can help keep everything running smoothly and prevent uncomfortable, awkward, and costly issues.



Why should you take time out of your busy day to think about your septic system?

Your septic system is your responsibility! Households and businesses that are not served by public sewers depend on onsite wastewater treatment systems to treat and dispose of their wastewater. These are most commonly known as septic systems. Management is the key to a lasting septic system that provides safe, environmentally-sound treatment of your wastewater.

How to maintain your septic system:

- Pump frequently
- Use water efficiently
- Watch what goes down your drain
- Care for your drainfield



Save Money!

The average cost of a replacement septic system is \$9,000 – 15,000. Even smaller repairs can be quite costly.

Save Your Yard!

Avoid the unsightly hassle of having your yard all torn up.

Don't wait until disaster strikes. Regularly pump out your system every 3-5 years.

A pump out costs a few hundred dollars depending on where you live, your tank's size, and whether your service provider has to locate or uncover it.

And certainly, if you have back-ups in your sink and toilets, THIS IS A SIGN OF TROUBLE!

Watching out for these signs is a good start but accurately identifying the root cause of a failing septic system takes experience.

So if there's a problem... who you gonna call???

The health department, a licensed septic tank pumper, or a certified septic installer.

These professionals assess the problem and make sure your system is working properly. They can also offer maintenance suggestions to save you money and aggravation.



Care for Your Drainfield

Keep sprinklers and excess water off the drainfield to prevent saturation.

Keep roots out. No woody vegetation (shrubs, trees, deep-rooted plants) within five feet of the drainfield. Fifteen feet is even better!

Avoid parking on the drainfield to prevent compaction.

Eliminate water softener discharge from entering your septic system.

Get your tank routinely pumped every 3-5 years (or as recommended by your inspector) to prevent solids, grease and fats from getting into drainfield pipes and gravel.

Watch Your Drain

No garbage or food waste.

No medicines, chemicals, or home toxics.

Do not flush rags or any type of baby or sanitary wipe down the toilet.

Keep grease, oils, and fats out.

Only wastewater from toilets, sinks, dishwashers, and clothes washers.

Use Water Efficiently

Install aerators in the kitchen and bathroom faucets.

Do laundry daily instead of several loads on one day to prevent overload.

Use low-flow showerheads and water-efficient toilets.

Take shorter showers and turn off the water when brushing teeth, soaping hands, or shaving.

Be sure to repair leaky faucets or toilets and use high-efficiency fixtures.

Rate your risk!

Rate your system's risk for failing.

How old is your septic system?

- A. 5 years or fewer
- B. 6 to 20 years
- C. Older than 20 years

How often is your tank pumped?

- A. At least every 3-5 years
- B. More than 5 years between pumping
- C. Has not been pumped/
don't know

How often do you pour oils, paints, solvents, pesticides, grease, coffee grounds, etc. down the drain?

- A. Never
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often

Do your sinks, tub, and/or shower drain slowly?

- A. Never
- B. 2-3 times a year
- C. More than 3 times a year

Do vehicles or heavy equipment drive over the drainfield?

- A. Never
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often

Do you use a garbage disposal?

- A. Never
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often

Do you flush cigarette butts, dental floss, kitty litter, diapers, sanitary napkins, or tampons down the toilet?

- A. Never
- B. Occasionally
- C. Often

Score 1 point for every A answer.
Score 2 points for every B answer.
Score 3 points for every C answer.

7-11 points: Low risk
12-16 points: Moderate risk
17 or more: High risk

If the system has never been pumped and is older than 10 years, **PUMP IT NOW!**



An important member of the team:



The Livingston County Health Department's Environmental Health Division is responsible for improving and protecting the public health, welfare, and environment through inspection programs, educational outreach, and as a last resort, enforcement powers conveyed through the State of Michigan Public Health Code and the Livingston County Sanitary Code.

Visit: www.lchd.org | Call: (517) 546-9858

More Septic System Resources:

- EPA SepticSmart
www.epa.gov/septicmart, (208) 378-5626
- EPA WaterSense
www.epa.gov/watersense, (866) 987-7367
- National Environmental Services Center
nesc.wvu.edu, (800) 624-8301

