

# SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

Protect Your  
Investment &  
Save Money



**(701) 388-6664**  
[www.dansexcavating.com](http://www.dansexcavating.com)

## WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU

As long as things are working as they should, most homeowners rarely give a thought to their septic system.

But this often overlooked asset can have a significant impact on your property value, health and expenses if not properly cared for.

A malfunctioning septic system can prevent you from getting a building permit, a loan on your property or selling it. In these cases, the septic system would have to be repaired or replaced.

Contamination from sewage leaks and spills not only smell bad, they pose a serious health threat to you, your family and your community.

Inadequately treated sewage contains dangerous bacteria - that can cause dysentery, hepatitis, and typhoid fever - and high levels of nitrates and phosphates - that prevent oxygen from entering your blood and cause algae overgrowth in lakes and streams.

While routine maintenance can cost \$100-\$300, that is a fraction of the \$3,000-\$10,000 it could cost to repair or replace a failing septic system.

A properly designed, constructed and maintained septic system can last anywhere from 15 to 40 years or more depending on what type of septic tank you have, how acidic your groundwater is, and the soil percolation rates for your area.

Your best and most cost-effective way to extend the life of your septic system is to perform the routine maintenance recommended in this guide.

*Routine maintenance is the best and most cost-effective way to extend the life of your septic system.*

## SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE IN 5 EASY STEPS

- **Inspect & Pump Frequently**
- **Use Water Efficiently**
- **Mind Your Drains & Dispose Carefully**
- **Care for Your Drain Fields**
- **Keep Good Records**

### STEP 1: INSPECT & PUMP FREQUENTLY

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends septic systems be inspected and pumped every 1 to 3 years, depending on the amount of use.

For systems that have electrical float switches, pumps, or mechanical components, annual inspections are recommended.

*Professional Inspection: 1 year*

*Pump System: 3-5 years*

A professional inspection includes:

#### 1. **Locating the System**

Once the system components are located, be sure to sketch a map and have it handy to save time on the next inspection.

#### 2. **Uncovering Access Holes**

This includes manhole and inspection ports. It's easiest if elevated access covers and risers are installed to prevent them from being buried easily.

#### 3. **Checking Connections**

To ensure household plumbing is draining into the system properly, toilets will be flushed, water will be run down sinks, and the washing machine and dishwasher will be run through a cycle.

#### 4. **Measuring Scum & Sludge Levels**

The tank will need to be pumped if the sludge layer is one-third or more of the liquid depth, or if the tank is one-third full.

## SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE IN 5 EASY STEPS

### 5. Identifying Leaks

Leaks can occur in connections and pipes that lead into and out of the septic tank or within the tank itself.

### 6. Inspecting Electrical and Mechanical Components

Electrical float switches and pumps, the lift station alarm, and mechanical components of the septic system will be checked to ensure they are functioning properly.

### 7. Checking The Drainfield

The drainfield and distribution box or drop box (if applicable) will also be checked for signs of leaking or failure.

### 8. Pumping the Tank, if necessary

How often your tank will need to be pumped depends on the size of your tank and the amount of use it gets.

### STEP 2:

### USE WATER EFFICIENTLY

Many people don't realize that overloading a septic system with too much water at one time can cause serious damage to the septic system.

There are some easy and affordable ways to prevent this from happening.

#### 1. Fix Leaky Sinks and Toilets

A leaky faucet wastes 5 gallons of water a day or more. A leaky toilet wastes as much as 200 gallons a day!

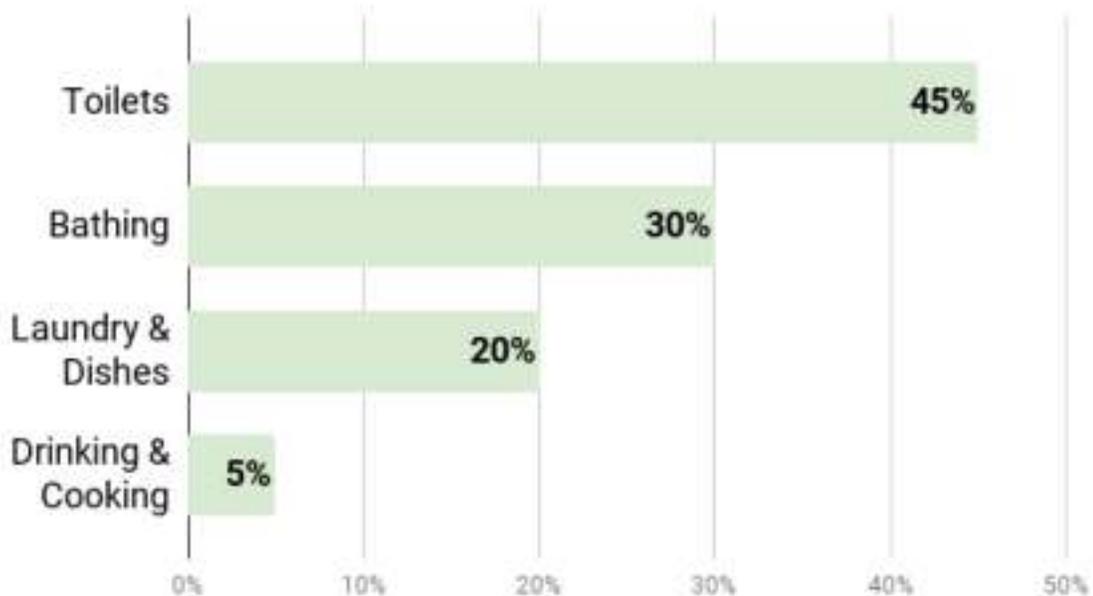
#### 2. Stagger High Use Activities

Water-hungry appliances like your washing machine and dishwasher, and modern appliances like hot tubs, garbage disposals, and water softeners discharge large amounts of water, chemicals and/or minerals, and solid waste into your septic system.

*Pumping your tank is probably the most important thing you can do to protect your septic system!*

## SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE IN 5 EASY STEPS

### Household Water Use



Staggering these activities gives your septic system adequate time to treat the wastes and your drainfield adequate time to absorb the wastewater.

It's best to run the dishwasher only when full, and spread laundry over several days, when you have a full load.

### 3. Invest in Water-Efficient Appliances & Fixtures

Normal toilets use 3 to 5 gallons per flush while water-efficient

toilets only use 1.6 gallons or less!

Energy Star-rated washing machines use 50 percent less water than their non-energy-efficient counterparts.

The average dishwasher uses 6 gallons of water per cycle while Energy Star-rated dishwashers use only 4 gallons.

Faucet aerators and high-efficiency shower heads or shower heads with restrictors also reduce the amount of water going to your septic system.

## SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE IN 5 EASY STEPS

4. Fill bathtubs and sinks with only as much water as necessary
5. Turn off faucets when shaving and brushing your teeth
6. Make sure faucets are completely turned off when not in use
7. **Avoid over-watering over your drainfield**

When watering your yard and landscaping, be careful not to run too much water over your drainfield as this will affect its ability to process and absorb wastewater from your septic system.

*Even a small leak can overburden your septic system!*

*To Measure the Effect: Place a measuring cup under the leak for 10 minutes. Now multiply that amount by 144. That's how much unnecessary water is being dumped into your septic system each day!*

### STEP 3: MIND YOUR DRAINS AND DISPOSE CAREFULLY

Maintaining the living organisms that digest and treat your wastewater is crucial to the effectiveness of your septic system.

There are certain things that should never be poured down drains or flushed down toilets including the following.

#### 1. Kitchen

- Food scraps
- Coffee grounds
- Grease & cooking oils
- Harsh chemicals or drain cleaners
- Antibacterial soaps & cleaners

#### 2. Laundry Room

- Bleach

#### 3. Bathroom

- Disinfectants
- Toilet bowl and drain cleaners
- Antibacterial soaps
- Hair
- Feminine products
- Condoms

**(701) 388-6664**

[www.dansexcavating.com](http://www.dansexcavating.com)

## SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE IN 5 EASY STEPS

- Dental floss
- Cotton swabs
- Cigarette butts
- Cat litter

In general, anything that can clog or become trapped in your septic system should never be flushed down toilets or poured down drains.

And never pour or flush hazardous wastes or chemicals into your drains - including pharmaceuticals, gasoline, pesticides, antifreeze, paint and solvents.

***Septic system additives can actually harm your septic system!***

### **Avoid Using Septic System Additives**

Studies have shown that septic system additives and cleaners provide no substantial benefit and can actually damage your septic system.

For this reason, we recommend against using them.

### **STEP 4: CARE FOR YOUR DRAINFIELDS**

Observe these simple rules to protect and maintain your drainfields.

#### **1. Plant only grass over and near your septic system**

Other plants, shrubs and trees can have invasive root systems that could damage your drainfield.

#### **2. Avoid driving over or parking on your drainfield**

Driving over and parking on your drainfield compresses the soil, affecting its ability to absorb and process wastewater, and may damage the pipes, tank, or other septic system components.

#### **3. Drain water away from the drainfield**

Water from airwater and surface water drainage systems, rain gutters, and sump pump drains should be directed away from your drainfield so they don't overburden your septic system, forcing solid wastes into your drainfield and posing a health hazard.

## SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE IN 5 EASY STEPS

### STEP 5: KEEP GOOD RECORDS

Keeping detailed records about your septic system will save you time and money when professionals visit.

These records will also help you determine how often your septic system needs to be pumped based on your unique situation.

*You may also be interested in other free resources available on our website!*

*Please visit  
<https://www.dansexcavating.com>  
to find out more!*

### SEPTIC SYSTEM RECORDS TO KEEP

- Sketch/diagram of your septic system and where it is located
- Permits
- Inspection reports
- Documentation you receive when it is pumped
- Repairs
- Business cards from the professionals who install, inspect, maintain, or repair your system.