



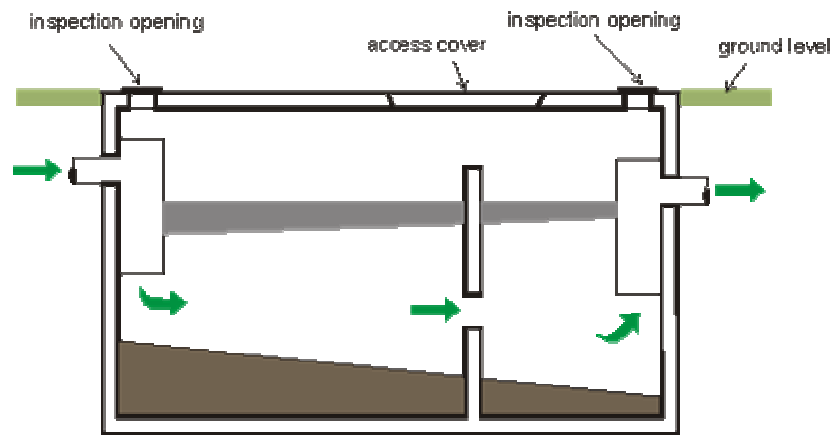
Septic Tank Fact Sheet

What is a Septic Tank and how does it operate?

Septic tanks have been used in un-sewered areas for many years as the most suitable form of primary treatment of sewage.

The septic tank is an underground watertight tank generally constructed of concrete or plastic which is usually divided into at least two compartments. The tank receives all sewage and separates the solid portion of the waste from the liquid portion. The liquid portion (effluent) passes out of the tank after approximately 24 hours. The tank performs three functions:

1. It acts as a settlement chamber for solid materials
2. It allows some bacterial breakdown of waste materials to occur
3. It acts as a storage chamber for undigested solid materials which must be removed periodically (usually every 4 years).



SEPTIC TANK

This document is produced as a guide only. All directions and or requirements by Council Staff must be followed when installing a Septic Tank



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Maintaining your Septic System

The following tips will help you to save money, reduce pollution and conserve resources:

- **Remove accumulated sludge from the tank:**
Generally, septic tanks require periodic cleaning or pumping out of accumulated solids every 4 years. If solids are allowed to build up in the tank to a point where they pass to the effluent treatment stage they can cause problems. Household pipes may become filled with sewage and the subsoil soil trench system could soon become clogged with solids. This may cause the effluent to come to the surface, pool and cause unpleasant smells. This can constitute a risk to public health, particularly to children playing in the vicinity.
- **Minimise or manage the volume of water entering the system** to improve the lifespan and operation of the absorption trench:
Regularly check plumbing fixtures for leaking taps or toilets cisterns. Have them repaired.
Ensure water from roof downpipes does not enter the system and roof water is diverted away from the effluent disposal area.
Install water saving devices such as shower heads that minimise water use and dual flush toilet cisterns
Spread large washing loads over several days to minimise the impact on your septic tank system. Plan your water usage so that large flows to the system in a short time are avoided, for example, operate the dishwasher and washing machine at separate times.
- **Ensure the system can be readily accessed for maintenance:**
Do not construct driveways, buildings or paved areas over the septic and soakage system as this may result in damage to the system and access problems when the tank requires pumping out at a later date.
- **Use household detergents and bleaches sensibly:**
The normal use of household detergents and bleaches is considered satisfactory.
- **Don't use the system for the disposal of chemicals:**
Don't dispose of medicines or strong chemicals such as pesticides and paints into the septic system. This can cause the septic tank to malfunction and may pollute groundwater.
- **Protect the septic tank and disposal area from damage:**
If the tank and disposal area are exposed to vehicle traffic use a barrier or other means to prevent vehicles driving over the tank and soakage as this could cause damage and result in costly repairs.
- **Prevent mosquito breeding:**
Ensure that all vents associated with the system are fitted with mosquito proof mesh and access openings are correctly sealed.

Note: Odours may occur on initial use of the system. If this becomes a problem consult your local council or the Department of Health.

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