



St. Charles County Government

Community Development Department

Division of Building Code Enforcement
David L. Hammond, Division Director

PRIVATE SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS aka SEPTIC SYSTEMS (THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF SEPTIC)

In St. Charles County, septic system failures can be caused and/or alleviated by the following:

1. Pump Your Tank – Septic tanks should be pumped every two to three years, this prevents solid material from entering the lateral lines and blocking fluid movement.
2. Do Not Put Anything Into Your Toilet Except Human Waste And Toilet Paper-Anything other than human waste and toilet paper may increase the need to pump the septic tank and may travel to the lateral lines and cause blockage.
3. Use only liquid or Low Phosphate Detergents – Solid detergents liquefy when agitated but will turn back into solids around the lateral lines and cause blockage.
4. Do Not Drive Over Your lateral Lines – Compaction of the soils may greatly reduce their absorbent qualities.
5. Do Not Pasture Animals On Your Lateral Lines – Compaction of the soils may greatly reduce their absorbent qualities.
6. Do Not Run Your Water Softener Through Your Septic System – Salts used in water softeners kill micro-organisms which break down sewage effluent, the salts may also resolidify in the soils and reduce their absorbent qualities.
7. Do Not Run Roof Drains Over/Toward Lateral Lines/Drainfield Area – Excess water will saturate the soils and cause the sewage effluent to come to the surface. Divert sump pump & drain tile, also.
8. Water Use - Be aware of what you are putting into your septic system. An excessive amount of laundry in one day adds a large volume of water into your septic system. Try spacing the laundry over a several day period. Install a low volume water closet (toilet) which uses approximately 1.6 gallons of water versus the usual 3 to 3 ½ gallons. Low pressure shower

heads, repairs to all leaking faucets or running toilets will also help to reduce water usage.

9. Ground Water – Ground water can cause problems at certain times of the year. If the ground water (water table) rises, this can cause effluent to surface.
10. Rainfall Amount – Rainfall can also cause failure. If the ground becomes saturated, the effluent may surface.
11. Dense Clay Soils – The dense clay soils in St. Charles County can cause septic systems to fail at any time, especially in wet conditions.
12. Garbage Disposals – Disposals add an extra load to the tank resulting in the need for frequent cleaning and a possible system failure. Be aware of coffee grounds, egg shells, raw vegetables and meat. This is not biodegradable in the septic tank. Grease can clog the perforated holes in the drainfield pipe. Adding chemicals, enzymes, etc. to the tank has not been proven to be beneficial and may cause the system to clog. Soaps, solvents and disinfectants are not harmful. Water softeners should not be installed to discharge into a septic system. The salt water (brine) from water softeners can destroy the bacterial action in the septic tank. The additional load of effluent from the softener turnover can put an additional load into the drainfield and cause the system to fail.

St. Charles County requires your septic tank to be pumped every two (2) years. The majority of septic tanks are aerated NSF Class I. The aerator motor should be inspected by a qualified tank manufacture inspector twice a year. A service agreement can be purchased from the tank manufacturer.

If a leach field is installed on a hillside, the area around the high side of the field should be bermed to prevent surface water run-off from saturating your field. Drain tile, sump pumps or roof gutters should also be diverted away from your septic system.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (636)949-7900, extension 7273.

Sandy May
Sanitarian II
St. Charles County Building Department