

Septic Systems

If your home relies on a septic system for disposal of sanitary waste instead of the public sewer system, there are things listed below that you can do to **avoid costly and messy septic failures**. Utilities has a variety of printed materials and a short video on how your septic system works and how to take care of it. If you would like more information, give us a call at 425-452-5208.

- **Locate your septic tank** and make sure the inspection lid is accessible. If you need help locating your septic tank, call the King County Department of Public Health at 206-296-4932. They may have an as-built drawing, which shows where your septic tank is located.
- **Have your tank inspected annually** to make sure there are no developing problems that can get out of control.
- **Get your tank pumped every three to five years**. Regular pumping reduces the chance of solids flowing into and clogging the drain field. Once the drain field is clogged, no amount of pumping can bring it back into service.
- **Use phosphate-free detergents and limit use of bleach**. Phosphates can cause excessive algae in nearby surface waters. Too much bleach will kill healthy microbial populations in your tank.
- **Keep cars and trucks off** the septic tank and drain field area to prevent pipes from breaking, and drainfield soils from compacting.
- **Do not use garbage disposals**. They increase the amount of solids and grease in the septic tank, which may result in drain field failure. They also dilute the microbial energy that breaks down the waste.
- **Do not use septic additives** or "miracle" septic system cleaners. They have never been found to work and can even harm the system by causing solids to flow into and clog the system.
- **Do not flush wastes** such as diapers, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, or grease into the septic system.
- **Do not put strong chemicals** such as cleaning products down the drain. These household chemicals can destroy important bacteria in the system and pollute groundwater.
- **Use water wisely**. Keep the amount of wastewater entering the septic system well below the "daily designed flow," which is the maximum number of gallons the system was designed to handle per day. For a 3-bedroom house the daily designed flow in gallons per day (gpd) is 450; for a 4 bedroom house its 480 gpd. A septic system cannot be run at its peak capacity for very long without problems developing. Using more water than the system is designed to manage is one of leading causes of premature septic system failure.
- **Do not connect failing septic systems** to a storm drain or drainage ditch.