

DON'T

- ✘ Put large quantities of bleaches, disinfectants, whiteners, nappy soakers and spot removers into your septic tank via the sink, washing machine or toilet.
- ✘ Allow any foreign materials such as nappies, sanitary napkins, condoms and other hygiene products to enter the system.
- ✘ Use more than the recommended amounts of detergents.
- ✘ Put fats and oils down the drain and keep food waste out of your system.
- ✘ Install or use a garbage grinder or spa bath if your system is not designed for it.

5 Reducing water usage

Reducing water usage will lessen the likelihood of problems such as overloading with your septic system. Overloading may result in wastewater backing up into your house, contamination of your yard with improperly treated effluent, and effluent from your system contaminating groundwater or a nearby river, creek or dam. Conservative water use around the house will reduce the amount of wastewater that is produced and needs to be treated. Your septic system is also unable to cope with large volumes of water such as several showers or loads of washing over a short period of time. You should try to avoid these 'shock loads' by ensuring water use is spread more evenly throughout the day and week.

6 Warning signs

There are a few warning signs that signal there are troubles with your septic system. Ensure that these

problems are attended to immediately to protect your health and the environment. Look out for the following warning signs:

- Water that drains too slowly.
- Drain pipes that gurgle or make noises when air bubbles are forced back through the system.
- Sewage smells, this indicates a serious problem.
- Water backing up into your sink, which may indicate that your septic system is already failing.
- Wastewater surfacing over the land application area.

Trouble shooting guide

If there are odours check the following areas:

- Greasetrap (if installed), is it full or blocked?
- Absorption field, is it wet or soggy?
- Has there been recent heavy rain?

Odour problems from a vent on the septic system can be a result of slow or inadequate breakdown of solids. Call a technician to service the system.

7 Help protect your health and the environment

Poorly maintained septic tanks are a serious source of water pollution and may present health risks, cause odours and attract vermin and insects. By looking after your septic system you can do your part in helping to protect the environment and the health of you and your family.

If you would like more information please contact:

CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL

PO Box 220 / DX 70506
19 King Edward Street
Ulverstone Tasmania 7315
Tel 03 6429 8900
Fax 03 6425 1224
admin@centralcoast.tas.gov.au
www.centralcoast.tas.gov.au

Septic Systems

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In unsewered areas, the proper treatment and reuse of household wastewater on-site is critical in ensuring minimal impact to public health and the environment. Septic systems have been developed as a way of achieving this.

1 What is a septic system?

A septic system consists of a septic tank combined with a soil absorption system and/or transpiration beds. The system enables people living in unsewered areas to treat and disperse their sewage.

A septic tank is a structurally sound watertight tank used for the treatment of sewage and liquid wastes from a single household, amenity buildings, shed etc.

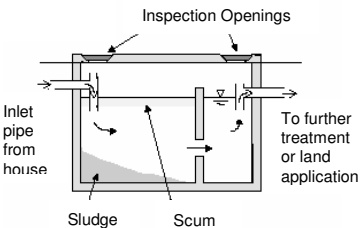
2 How does a septic system work?

Sewage and kitchen sink wastewater from a household enters the tank. Most of the solids settle to the bottom and are retained in the tank forming a sludge layer, whilst fats and greases collect at the top in a scum layer. Bacteria in the septic tank break down the solid matter in the sludge

and scum layers.

Material that cannot be fully broken down gradually builds up in the tank and must be pumped out periodically.

There are two



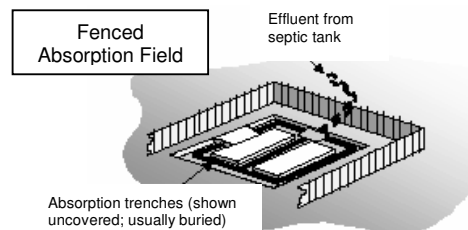
Cross Section of a Septic Tank

ways to handle septic tank effluent:

On-site application. The effluent flows by gravity from the septic tank to transpiration and/or absorption trenches.

Here the effluent is mainly absorbed into the soil and partly evaporated by the sun and used by vegetation.

Such application systems have the potential to contaminate groundwater and are not recommended in sensitive locations or in higher density developments. Further treatment followed by subsurface irrigation should be considered.



Sump/Pump out. The effluent flows from the septic tank into a collection well or holding tank. Once the tank reaches a pre-determined height the effluent is pumped to a remote absorption field. This system is used where the soil absorption area is above the house or removed from the immediate area and gravity cannot be utilised.

3 Regulations and recommendations

An on-site septic system requires approval from the Central Coast Council before it is put in place. On-site wastewater management systems for multiple dwellings like caravan parks and commercial and industrial premises will need to be designed by a suitably qualified person. The Tasmanian Department of Justice (DOJ) authorises plumbing products before they can be sold to the public. Local councils have the authority to approve systems certified by the Tasmanian DOJ for individual properties and ensure the systems do not have adverse

impacts on health and the environment. Local councils are responsible for ensuring that the approved system is installed according to specifications and any special conditions, and is maintained and serviced correctly. You should consult the Central Coast Council on the regulations that apply to you. Care of the septic tank is only a part of the maintenance of your septic system. Management of the treated wastewater from your septic system is your responsibility. Heavy fines may be imposed if the effluent is managed improperly.

4 Maintaining your septic system

The effectiveness of the system will, in part, depend on how it is operated and maintained. The following is a guide on how to achieve the most from your system:

DO

- ✓ Have your septic tank desludged every three years. To prevent sludge build up, which may 'clog' the pipes and absorption trenches.
- ✓ Have your septic tank serviced annually by contractors to check scum and sludge levels, and the presence of blockages in the outlet and inlet pipes.
- ✓ Have your grease trap (if installed) cleaned out at least every two months.
- ✓ Keep a record of pumping, inspections, and other maintenance.
- ✓ Learn the location and layout of your septic system and land application area.
- ✓ Check household products for suitability for use with a septic tank.
- ✓ Use biodegradable liquid detergents such as concentrates with low phosphorous.
- ✓ Conserve water.