

# Is Your Septic System Failing?

On-site septic facilities, also known as septic systems, are systems designed to treat and dispose of wastewater effluent on the same property that produces the wastewater, hence the term “on-site.” When septic systems begin to fail, not only do they not function properly, but they can damage your property and are costly to replace. The key is to catch the warning signs early on.

## Signs of a failing septic system:



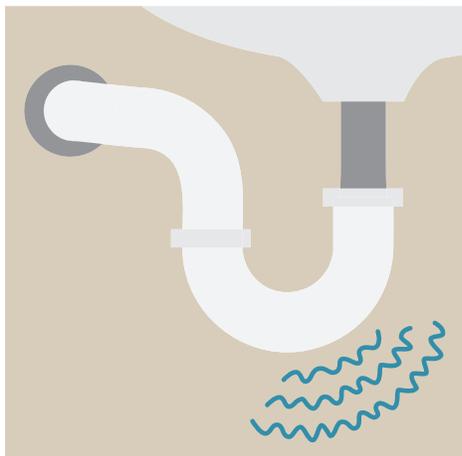
Standing water or damp spots near your septic tank or drainfield/sprayfield



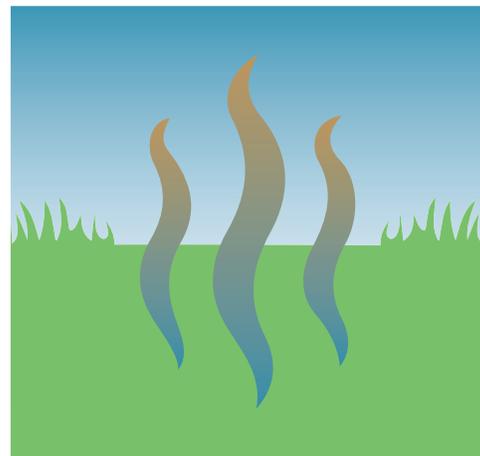
Water and sewage from toilets, drains and sinks are backing up into your home



Your bathtubs, showers and sinks are draining slowly



Gurgling sounds in your plumbing system



Bad odors around your septic tank or drainfield/sprayfield

# What to Avoid

## Using garbage disposals

- Pumping is required 1-2 years sooner
- Organic matter has not been digested, so it will take longer to break down

## Using cleaning products on toilets, sinks or baths that kill bacteria

- Look at the warning label: “caution” means the product will have little effect; “warning” means limited use; and “danger” means the chemical will kill the bacteria

## Pouring paints, solvents and unused medicine down the drain

- Can kill bacteria living in the system
- Increases maintenance due to fewer bacteria breaking down solids

## Flushing excessive or treated toilet paper down the drain

- Causes faster sludge build up
- Toilet paper containing moisturizers may result in excessive scum accumulation

## Flushing wet wipes

- May accumulate in the tank as scum or sludge
- Wet wipes do not break up in a septic system; flushing them can lead to blockages that cause sewage overflow

## Using septic system additives

- Many have not been proven to be beneficial to system performance
- Can resuspend particles that are settled at the bottom, potentially harming the drainfield/sprayfield

## Doing multiple loads of laundry a day

- Causes mixing of layers and hydraulic overloading in the settling chamber, disrupting proper system function and damaging system components
- Avoid over-using bleach and detergents by following the instructions on product labels

## Pouring excessive fats, oils and grease down the drain

- Be mindful to limit the amount of fats, oils and grease going down the drain
- Fats separate in water resulting in excessive scum accumulation but will not kill wastewater system bacteria
- Oils have trouble separating in water but will not kill wastewater system bacteria
- Moisturizers, bath oils and solid material on pans are examples of grease; petroleum-based products may kill wastewater system bacteria

## For more information, contact:

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