

# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



## ON-SITE SEWAGE FACILITY (OSSF) CARE & MAINTENANCE

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## Maintenance and Management, Continued

12. Restrict the use of your system, if it has electrical components, when electricity is out.
13. If you have an aerobic system, don't allow the electrical service to be interrupted.
14. Distribute excessive wastewater flows like laundry water over several days.
15. Do not plumb air conditioning drains or commercial ice makers into the OSSF.
16. Conserve water.
17. Do not expose yourself or your family to wastewater.

## Overview

An estimated 25% of households in Williamson County use on-site treatment methods (OSSF) for the disposal of wastewater. The lifespan of an OSSF depends on the type of system, the proper design and installation of the system, and proper maintenance. Since most household systems are not properly maintained, the typical service life of an OSSF is 20 years or less. Proper maintenance is critical to reduce your costs; extend the life of the system; to operate the system efficiently; to prevent contamination of water sources; to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases; and to prevent the creation of public health nuisances.



## Maintenance and Management

All on-site wastewater treatment systems (OSSF) require maintenance. Different types of systems require different maintenance procedures. Follow the maintenance instructions provided for the equipment installed for your system. These general tips will help you keep your OSSF operating longer.

1. Limit the use of garbage disposals.
2. Do not put anything except toilet paper in the toilets.
3. Have the tank pumped before sludge accumulates to the outlet device.
4. Establish a regular schedule of pumping. Use only licensed pumpers and get a trip ticket. Pump the tank every 3 - 5 years.
5. Don't build driveways, buildings or structures within 5' of the tank or drainfield.
6. Do not drive heavy equipment over your system.
7. Do not use chemical additives. Natural bacteria are present and additives can harm your tank or flush solids into the drainfield.
8. Use bleaches and cleaners in moderation.
9. Do not divert water softener backflush water to the pretreatment tank.
10. Maintain a healthy grass cover over the drainfield.
11. Do not allow water to sit over your system. Divert surface runoff.

# OPERATION

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If your home or business uses an on-site wastewater treatment system (OSSF) you need to know how to operate and maintain the system properly to prevent pollution and sewage backups. Treat it properly so that it will provide effective service.

Proper operation and maintenance will:

1. Decrease your costs.
2. Protect the health of the people living on and near your property.
3. Help safeguard your property values.
4. Help preserve the quality of groundwater and prevent degradation of nearby waterways.

## **Standard Systems:**

Standard systems are the most cost effective means to treat domestic wastewater. They consist of a septic tank and soil absorption system. All components are underground with the watertight septic tank settling large solids at the bottom and floatable solids, including fats and greases, on top. Some solids are digested, but most will be retained in the tank until removed by periodic pumping. Water then flows through an outlet "T" and enters the soil absorption field. For additional protection, an effluent filter can be placed in the outlet "T" to trap more solids and prevent them from clogging the drainfield.

The soil absorption field provides final treatment and distribution of the effluent (wastewater). A drainfield consists of perforated pipe surrounded by storage media, most commonly gravel. The gravel is covered with filter fabric and then a loamy (sandy) soil.

The soil filters the wastewater and contains microorganisms that help remove solids, organic matter and nutrients in the water. The water must travel through unsaturated soil for microbial action. The grass covering the soil will also use the water and nutrients for growth.

## **Engineered & Aerobic Systems:**

Engineered systems will frequently add a pump tank which uses a pump, a high water alarm float, pump on and off floats, and visual and audible alarms that warn of pump failure. Check and test these components yearly. The term "aerobic system" refers to an added treatment tank with control panels and an aerator that bubbles air into an underground tank. Add chlorine as needed and maintain a service policy with a licensed maintenance company at all times.

## **If you have an aerobic system:**

- Keep a contract with a licensed service provider and submit it to the WCCHD within 30 days of expiration of the previous contract.
- Complete a license renewal/transfer every two years with the WCCHD.
- Repair all problems quickly, part failures can cause other components to malfunction.

## **Things You Can Do to make sure your OSSF works properly:**

- Do have your tank pumped periodically (3-5 years). Sludge accumulation will decrease the detention time needed to remove solids.
- Place watertight securable risers over tank openings to prevent surface water infiltration.
- Protect your system from rainfall and runoff by diverting rainfall from roofs and concrete areas.
- Plant cool season grasses over the drainfield in winter to help remove water from the system.
- Obtain information from your water provider on ways to conserve water.
- Periodically, check your toilets for leaks.
- Don't drive or park vehicles over the OSSF.

## **Required Licenses**

The State and Williamson County require the following individuals to be licensed before working on any OSSF:

**Installers, Apprentices, Site Evaluators, Maintenance Providers, Maintenance Technicians and Wastewater Transporters.**

Contact WCCHD to verify licensure.