

# **SEPTIC SYSTEMS**

## **State Regulations**

Following is the state regulation setbacks for septic tanks and drainfields. The regulations are in place for the health and safety of property owners as well as the protection of adjoining homeowners and public lands – especially streams and drinking water supplies. The following are minimum distance requirements.

### **Septic Tanks:**

- 50' from a well greater than 100' deep
- 75' from a well less than 100' deep
- 50' from cisterns
- 50' from high water line of lakes, streams or impoundments
- 25' from pressurized water lines
- 10' from dwelling
- 10' from all property lines

### **Drainfields:**

- 100' from a well greater than 100' deep
- 150' from a well less than 100' deep
- 100' from cisterns
- 100' from high water line of lakes, stream or impoundments
- 25' from pressurized water lines
- 20' from dwelling
- 10' from all property lines

The minimum septic tank size is 1000 gallons for a 3 bedroom home with no garbage disposal. The size of the tank increases with additional bedrooms and garbage disposal.

## **SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE**

### **DO NOT**

- \* Do not use large quantities of drain solvent, disinfecting solutions and strong chemicals – this destroys bacterial action and causes rapid accumulation of sludge.
- \* Do not use additives (chemicals, yeasts, bacteria, enzymes, etc.). They are not necessary for the proper functioning of the septic system.
- \* Do not flush sanitary napkins, tampons and disposable diapers.
- \* Do not put excess amounts of grease down drain.
- \* Do not drive over system.
- \* Do not plant trees or shrubs over or near drainfield.
- \* Do not cover drainfield with hard surface.
- \* Do not allow backwash from home water softeners to enter the system.
- \* Do not allow water from sump pumps through the system.
- \* Do not dispose of coffee grounds, petroleum products or latex based paints into system.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- \* Have an inspection by a licensed installer or engineer.
- \* Find septic tank, size of tank and location of drainfield and make a diagram.
- \* Keep cleaning and service records.
- \* Pump tank every 3 to 5 years (more often with a garbage disposal). A rule of thumb is that a 1000 gallon septic tank serving 4 or 5 occupants needs to be cleaned every 2 to 3 years. If a garbage disposal is used, the tank may require annual cleaning. The tank should be pumped

through the manhole not the 4 inch inspection pipe. If pumping is not done regularly, the solids may flow into the drainfield, plugging the soil absorption system causing failure.

- \* Avoid an automatic sprinkler system over the drainfield, it over saturates the drainfield.
- \* Use toilet paper recommended for septic systems.
- \* Use liquid laundry detergent.
- \* Use low flow appliances.

### **SIGNS OF SYSTEM FAILURE**

- \* Tank effluent surfacing.
- \* Sewage backup in the house.

With proper care, a septic system has a life of 15 to 20 years. Older systems that have cast iron pipes at the outlet of the tank will corrode shut in 5 to 15 years. Any system older than 20 years should be upgraded to protect ground water and drinking water sources.