

# MAINTAINING YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

ALABAMA  
PUBLIC  
HEALTH

Septic systems collect, treat and dispose of wastewater from your home. Your septic system has four parts: the septic tank, effluent filter, distribution box or a Flow Divider (optional), and the effluent disposal field or drain field.

Your septic system should be properly maintained to assure years of trouble-free service. Contact your licensed septic tank pumper to clean your septic tank and effluent filter every 3 to 5 years.

Failing septic tank systems can:

- Be a health hazard.
- Pollute the groundwater and environment.
- Reduce your property value.
- Be expensive to repair.

## WARNING SIGNS OF SEPTIC SYSTEM PROBLEMS

- Wet spots in the yard.
- Slow draining toilets or drains.
- Gurgling sounds in your drains.
- Sewage odors.

If you suspect your septic system is not working properly, visit the website below or call (334) 206-5373 to get information about getting a septic system designed, installed, or repaired so that it works with your property's soil. ADPH will not use your personal information to report you for straightpiping or having a septic system that does not work.

## DO'S AND DON'TS FOR SEPTIC SYSTEMS

- **DO** Have your system pumped every 3-5 years.
- **DO** Have an effluent filter placed in your septic tank.
- **DO** Contact your licensed septic tank system contractor for service every 1-2 years.
- **DO** Keep good records concerning your system.
- **DO** Repair all leaking plumbing fixtures, such as toilets, no matter how small the leak.
- **DO** Conserve water by avoiding long showers. Use washing machines, dishwashers and other water devices sparingly and evenly over a 7-day period.
- **DO** Divert gutter drains and rain water away from your tanks and drainfield.
- **DON'T** Use a garbage disposal
- **DON'T** Allow anyone to park or drive over your system.
- **DON'T** Dig into your drain field or build anything over the top of it.
- **DON'T** Have repairs made to your system without first contacting your health department and a licensed installer.
- **DON'T** Use septic tank additives or enzymes of any kind.
- **DON'T** Dump grease, disposable diapers, tampons, condoms, paper, plastics, and cigarette butts down your toilet or drains.
- **DON'T** Dump chemicals such as paint thinner, pesticides, prescription drugs, excessive amounts of cleaners, or detergents, or other hazardous substances into your system.
- **DON'T** Build a swimming pool near your system.

Go to [alabamapublichealth.gov/environmental/septic-system-program.html](http://alabamapublichealth.gov/environmental/septic-system-program.html)  
or call (334) 206-5373 to learn more.