

Septic System and Water Quality

Surface discharge of wastewater from septic systems is prohibited, and is a threat to public health and our watersheds.



Septic systems can impact local drinking water or surface water bodies. The extent of this impact depends on how well your septic system is maintained. If your septic system is discharging to the street, gutter, drainage ditch, storm drain, or waterway, you must cease the discharge immediately.

Help us keep our creeks and rivers clean, and support healthier, more sustainable communities by properly maintaining your septic system and reporting discharges as soon as possible.

Contact

Contact the Consumer Protection Division immediately if wastewater is found surfacing from a septic system.

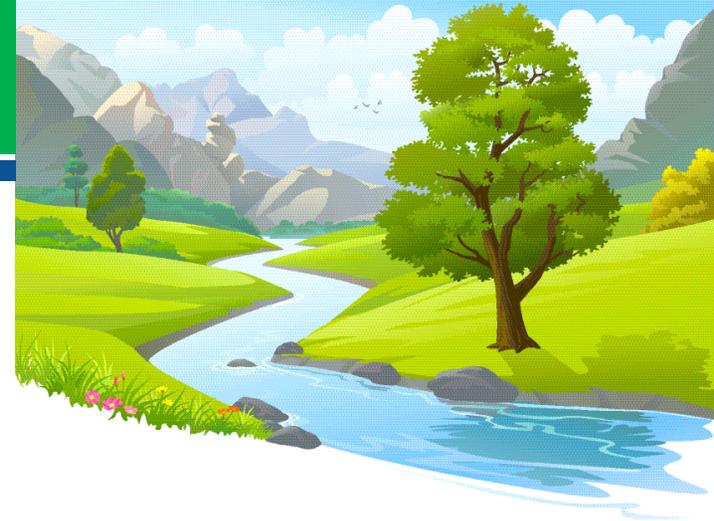
Department of Environmental Health
Consumer Protection Division
(408) 918-3400
www.ehinfo.org/wastewater

If wastewater discharge is observed flowing to the street or a nearby creek, please also notify the County's Clean Water Program immediately.

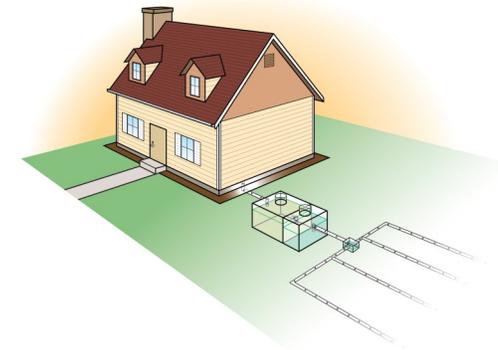
Clean Water Program
(408) 918-4600
www.cleanwaterscc.org

RESOURCES:

Stormwater Pollution Prevention Information:
www.mywatershedwatch.org



**MAINTAIN
YOUR
SEPTIC SYSTEM
PROTECT
OUR
WATERWAYS**



County of Santa Clara
Consumer and Environmental
Protection Agency



How Septic Systems Work

Septic systems, also known as onsite wastewater treatment systems, treat residential wastewater to reduce the pollution impact on the environment and protect public health. A typical residential septic system is composed of two primary parts: a septic tank and a drainfield (leaching field). Septic systems are necessary for residences in rural areas that do not have access to a centralized wastewater treatment plant.

Wastewater from your home enters the septic tank where solids settle to the bottom of the first compartment and the digestible solids are broken down by bacteria. The non-digestible solids, or sludge, remain in the tank and need to be pumped out by a licensed contractor. The remaining effluent reaches the drainfield, where bacteria in the soil, along with natural filtration through the ground, treats the wastewater from your home.

It is important to have the accumulating solids in your septic tank pumped every 3-5 years to prevent potential clogging of your drainfield. You can locate your septic system by obtaining a copy of your septic "as-built" plan, checking your yard for lids and manhole covers, or contacting a licensed pumper. Most septic systems fail because of inappropriate design or poor maintenance.



Septic System Information

Septic System Tips

- Reduce the use of your garbage disposal to avoid adding excess particulates, which may clog your drainfield.
- Do not pour grease or cooking oil down the kitchen drain.
- Do not overload your septic system with an excessive amount of wastewater; the system is only sized to accommodate for the number of bedrooms at the time of installation.
- The septic tank should be pumped every 3 to 5 years to remove collected solids.
- Keep surface waters away from the septic tank and drainfield; gutter downspouts for rainfall may oversaturate your system.
- Do not plant deep rooted trees over the drainfield, which may clog up the drainlines.
- Do not plan any building additions, pools, driveways, or other construction work near the existing septic system or designated expansion areas necessary for septic repair.
- Install watertight access risers over the septic tank to allow for routine and pumping.
- Keep automobiles and heavy equipment off the septic system.



Signs of Septic System Failure

Call a septic professional if you notice any of the following:

- Sinks, showers or tubs that drain slowly or back up because of a clog in plumbing or failure of the septic system;
- A strong sewage odor in or around your home;
- Wet, spongy ground or lush-plant growth near the septic tank or drainfield, even during dry weather;

