

BEST PRACTICES



Septic System Care Begins with You!

Many Thurston County residents have an on-site septic system in their backyard that treats wastewater from toilets, dishwashers, laundry, showers, tubs and more. The nearly 53,000 septic systems in Thurston County treat about 12,000,000 gallons of sewage per day! In order for your septic system to do its job, it needs regular inspections and maintenance. A well maintained system helps protect your investment and our community's drinking and surface waters.

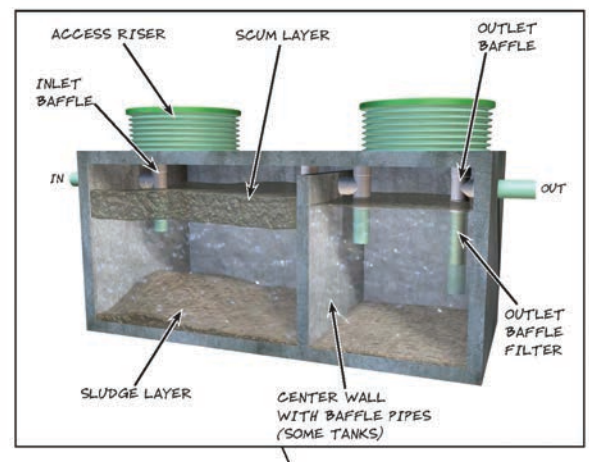
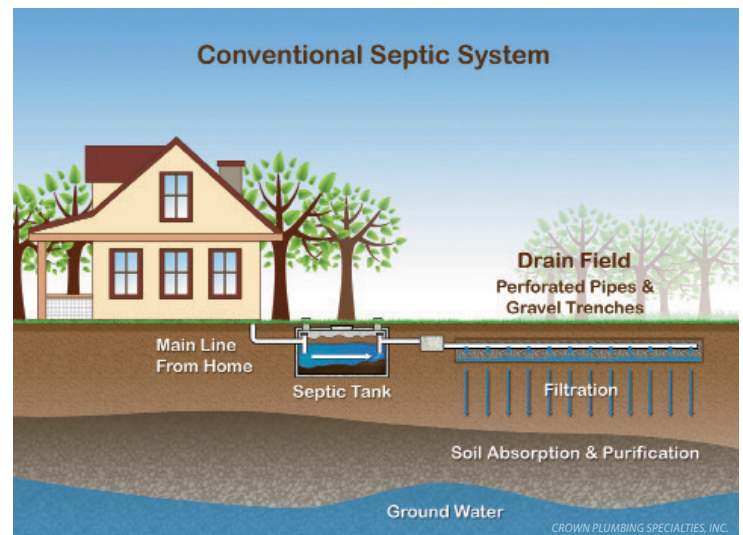
Regular maintenance of your septic system will help ensure that you and your family have a functioning system to handle all of your household sewage! This means having your septic system inspected every 1-3 years and getting on a regular pumping schedule. Most households need to have their tanks pumped every 3-

5 years. Regular inspections can help you determine when you need to pump and can identify problems while they are still small, saving you time and money in the long-run. Failing septic systems create a serious financial burden on homeowners (the average cost for replacing a septic tank and drain field is over \$12,000!).

Regular inspections that find and fix problems also protects the health of your family, community and our environment. Failing and improperly functioning septic systems can contaminate lakes, rivers streams and Puget Sound. Contamination of surface waters can lead to outbreaks of disease, beach and shellfish harvesting closures, harmful algal blooms and low dissolved oxygen levels that harm fish and wildlife. Failing septic systems can also contaminate ground water, our drinking water source in Thurston County, and drinking water wells.

Tips for prolonging the life of your septic system:

- Save water in your home. Take quick showers and use water-saving appliances and fixtures.
- Upgrade old water wasting appliances and check with your water utility to see if they offer high-efficiency toilet and washing machine rebates. Your electricity company may also offer washing machine rebates.
- Space out water use throughout the week to make sure there isn't too much water to treat at one time.
- Do not flush solids like cigarettes, tampons, baby wipes, and grease down the drain.
- Avoid the use of garbage disposals.



- Don't use septic tank additives. They don't replace the need to pump your tank and may be expensive and do more harm than good.
- To prevent pipes from breaking and soil from compacting, never drive or park a vehicle on the septic tank and/or drain field.

Contact Thurston County Public Health for more information on ways to prolong the life of your septic system at 360-867-2577 or view publications online at www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehoss

Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater water customers with onsite septic systems may be eligible for a rebate to connect to City sewer!

LOTT Clean Water Alliance is currently offering an instant rebate of 50% off their connection fee. Low income property owners may even be eligible for an additional 25% off. Contact your water service provider for more information.

- Lacey: 360-486-8707
- Olympia: 360-753-8562
- Tumwater: 360-754-4140

Source: Stream Team News, Summer 2017

Information contributed by Jennifer Johnson, Thurston County Public Health