

Follow these septic system  
**DO's and DON'TS !!!**

DO'S	DON'TS
Conserve water	Overload system
Substitute for bleach and ammonia cleaners	Flush medicines and hazardous materials down drain
Plant grass on drainfield	Plant deep rooted plants near tank or drainfield
Know location of all system components	Park, drive on, or allow animals access to drainfield
Perform periodic septic system maintenance and inspections	Wait until there is a problem before inspecting your septic system

**Don't Flush Household Hazardous Waste!**

Visit the HHW website for the drop-off location nearest to you!

<http://www.oregon.gov/deq/Hazards-and-Cleanup/hw/Pages/HHW-by-County.aspx>

Or call 1-800-732-9253



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Washington County Environmental Health  
155 N First Avenue, Hillsboro, OR 97124, Suite 170  
Phone: (503) 846-8722 Fax: (503) 846-3705  
Email: [Environmental Health](mailto:EnvironmentalHealth@dcse.org)

**Why You Care About Your  
Septic System**

**Protect Your Investment**

It is typically much cheaper to properly maintain a working septic system than it is to repair or replace a failing septic system.

**Protect Community Health**

Septic system owners, their neighbors, and the surrounding community run the risk of coming into contact with harmful bacterial and viral pathogens when septic systems are not properly maintained.

**Protect Drinking Water**

Septic systems that are not working properly can contaminate groundwater sources. More than 70% of all Oregonians are at least partially dependent on groundwater for their drinking water supplies!

**Protect Environment**

Septic systems that are not working properly can contaminate surface waters, which disrupts natural systems and impairs aquatic and riparian life.

Be  
Septic  
Smart



**Public Health**  
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What to consider BEFORE Buying a Home



# Don't Take Chances...

## Know Before You Buy!



Public Health  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Septic systems are designed to collect and purify the water that goes down the drains in your home. There are two main parts to a conventional septic system.

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### 1) Septic Tank

The septic tank is a watertight container buried in the ground. It is designed to collect all of the water that comes from your home. For example, every time you flush a toilet, or do a load of laundry, you are sending water to your septic tank. When water enters the septic tank, the solids sink to the bottom of the tank (sludge) and oils float to the top of the tank (scum). All of the liquid between the sludge and scum layers is called wastewater. Once the tank is full, wastewater is pushed from the septic tank to the drainfield.

### 2) Drainfield

The drainfield, also called leach field, usually consists of a series of trenches that sit below the ground. These trenches are filled with a porous material and covered with soil. Wastewater from the septic tank is dispersed into the trenches. Microbes then purify the wastewater, as it moves down through the soil profile below the trenches. Microbes are responsible for purifying your waste!

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The microbes are doing *their* job, but what can *you* do to keep your system working properly? Follow these guidelines for Operation and Maintenance of your septic system.

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### Operation:

The first step in keeping your septic system working is to make sure that you and your family are *using* it properly. Of course, *never* flush materials that are hard to decompose down your drains. For example, cigarette butts, hair and food scraps are not septic friendly! Check out a list of DO'S and DON'TS for septic systems on the back of this brochure!

### Maintenance:

Your septic system will need periodic maintenance even when you and a healthy microbial population are doing the job properly. Having periodic septic system inspections can help to save you thousands of dollars in expensive repairs or even system replacement!

Visit :

<http://www.oregon.gov/deq/Residential/Pages/Septic-Smart.aspx>

for a list of certified and experienced [Onsite Maintenance Providers](#).

**Have questions? Call 541-686-7905**

### Ask These Questions First !!!

#### Is the system currently working?

The best way to find out is to have a certified [Onsite Maintenance Provider](#) do an Existing System Evaluation.

#### Are there maintenance, pumping or repair records?

Checking maintenance records will help you to identify if potentially costly repairs may be needed.

#### If the existing system fails, how will you repair it and what will it cost?

Repairs or replacement can be expensive. Plan ahead for system expenses!

#### Where is the existing system located?

Planting, building or driving on the drainfield will ruin the system! There should also be a reserve area for a replacement system. Do not build or pave over the reserve area either!

#### Is there a septic system permit on file with the DEQ or local County agency?

If no permit is on file, the system may have been installed without a permit or be very old. You could be held responsible if the system fails or causes a public health risk.

#### Will the existing system support any changes to the home?

You may need a larger system if you make additions to the home. Ask *before* you build!