

USER MANUAL

Do's and Don'ts

For

EFFLUENT COLLECTION SYSTEM

It's important to understand that the first step to a successful sewage collection system begins with homeowner education. A knowledgeable homeowner can prevent premature failures and eliminate costly repairs. Your effluent collection system is composed of a septic tank and plastic pressure mains. All waste from your house flows into the septic tank where it is digested. The solids settle to the bottom of the tank. The scum floats to the top. The middle portion of the tank remains fairly clear. The clear liquid is pumped out of the tank into the pressure sewer main.

Items that cause problems and failure of this system are:

1. Excessive sludge or scum accumulation in septic tank
2. Excessive water usage
3. Some fabric softeners and whiteners
4. Excessive grease and oil from food processing
5. Diapers, rags, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, plastic and rubber products (condoms), and chemical cleaners
6. Any non-biologically degradable substances will cause problems in the septic tank.

A properly maintained septic tank provides a high degree of treatment and yields an effluent that is relatively free of greases and solids that can clog the effluent filter and pump. The best practice is not to discharge anything into a septic system that is poisonous or that may inhibit the abilities of the friendly critters (bacteria) living and working there. An excellent guideline that should be practiced in every household is not to dispose anything into the septic tank that hasn't first been ingested, with the exception of toilet paper and mild detergents.

The following tips and recommendations list good healthy practices that will help to insure a long life for your septic tank system and minimal maintenance.

DON'TS

Don't connect rain gutters or storm drains or allow other surface water to get into your septic tank. This additional water will overload your septic tank system and cause a premature failure. Your septic tank was designed for only domestic water use.

Don't use excessive quantities of water. Repair leaky toilets, faucets or plumbing fixtures (leaky toilets can result in excess flows a 1 gallon per minute). Use water saving devices such as low flow shower heads and low volume flush toilets.

Don't flush undesirable substances into the sewer. Flushing flammable and toxic products is dangerous, while other materials such as paper towels, rags, newspaper, cigarettes, coffee grounds, egg shells, sanitary napkins, condoms, large amounts of hair and cooking grease are a maintenance nuisance and will require frequent pumping of septage from the tank.

Don't dump recreational vehicle <RV> waste into your septic tank because it will increase the amount of solids entering the septic tank and the frequency of required septage pumping. Some RV waste may contain chemicals that are toxic or that may adversely affect the biological activity in your tank.

Don't use garbage disposal systems to dispose of non-biodegradable materials because they increase the amount of solids entering the septic tank and the frequency of require septage pumping. Compost scraps or dispose with your trash. Collect grease in a container rather than disposing down the drain. Do not pour grease down the drain. Pouring Grease down the drain is your fastest way to insure a failing system. (and expensive repair).

Don't use special additives that claim they will enhance the performance of your tank. *Additives do not improve the performance of the septic tanks and can cause major damage* to other areas in the collection system. The natural micro-organisms and bacteria that form in your system are sufficient. These organisms generate their own enzymes for breaking down and digesting nutrients.

DO's

Do call **Ridgetop Sewer at 615-859-0596** whenever the alarm comes on. (It sounds like a smoke alarm) The audible alarm can be silenced by pushing the illuminated light located directly above the "PUSH THE SILENCE" label on the front of the electrical control panel. With normal use the tank has a reserve storage capacity good for 24-36 hours.

Do familiarize yourself with the location of the electrical control panel and note the number on the panel.

Location of new landscaping or permanent structures should be coordinated with the city prior to installation in order to ensure the integrity of the septic tank.

Do practice water conservation. By reducing the amount of water going into your system you can extend the life of the system and reduce the power consumption. Wash clothes and dishes only when you have a full load. When possible avoid several loads in one day.

Do be aware that a simple toilet float can hang up and result in over 2000 gallons per day of wasted water; normal household usage ranges from 300 to 500 gallons per day.

Don't dispose water softener backwash in the tank. The backwash brine contains high levels of chlorides that can destroy the microorganisms and inhibit the biological digestion that occurs in the septic tank. The brine solution also interferes with the solid's sedimentation that occurs in the tank, and may increase the flow through the tank from 25 to 50 percent.

SUBSTITUTES FOR HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Replace the following hazardous products with ones less environmentally harmful. The hazardous cleaners are listed in bold face, followed by the suggested substitute.

AMMONIA-BASED CLEANERS: Sprinkle Baking Soda on a damp sponge. For window, use a solution of 2 Tbs. White Vinegar to 1 qt. water. Place the mixture into the spray bottle.

DISINFECTANTS: Use Borax: ½ cup in a gallon of water; deodorizes also.

DRAIN DECLOGGERS: Use a Plunger or Metal Snake, or remove and clean trap.

SCOURING CLEANERS AND POWDERS: Sprinkle Baking soda on a damp sponge or add 4 Tbs. Baking Soda to 1qt. warm water or use Bon Ami. It's cheaper and won't scratch.

CARPET/UPHOLSTERY CLEANERS: Sprinkle Dry cornstarch or Baking soda on, then vacuum. For tougher stains, blot with White Vinegar in soapy water.

TOILET CLEANERS: Sprinkle on Baking Soda or Bon Ami, then scrub with a toilet brush.

FURNITURE/FLOOR POLISHES: to clean, use Oil Soap and warm water. Dry with soft cloth. Polish with 1 part Lemon Juice to 2 part Oil <any kind>, or use natural products with Lemon Oil or Beeswax in Mineral Oil.

METAL CLEANERS: Brass and copper scrub with a used half of Lemon dipped in Salt. Stainless steel: use Scouring Pad and Soapy Water. Silver: rub gently with toothpaste and soft wet cloth.

OVEN CLEANERS: Quickly sprinkle salt on drips, then scrub. Use Baking Soda and scouring pads on older spills.

LAUNDRY DETERGENT: Choose one with a zero phosphate content or use Soap Flakes with 1/3 cup of Washing Soda. <Before switching, wash clothes in pure washing soda to remove detergent residues.>