

Understanding and Maintaining your Septic Tank & Drain Field

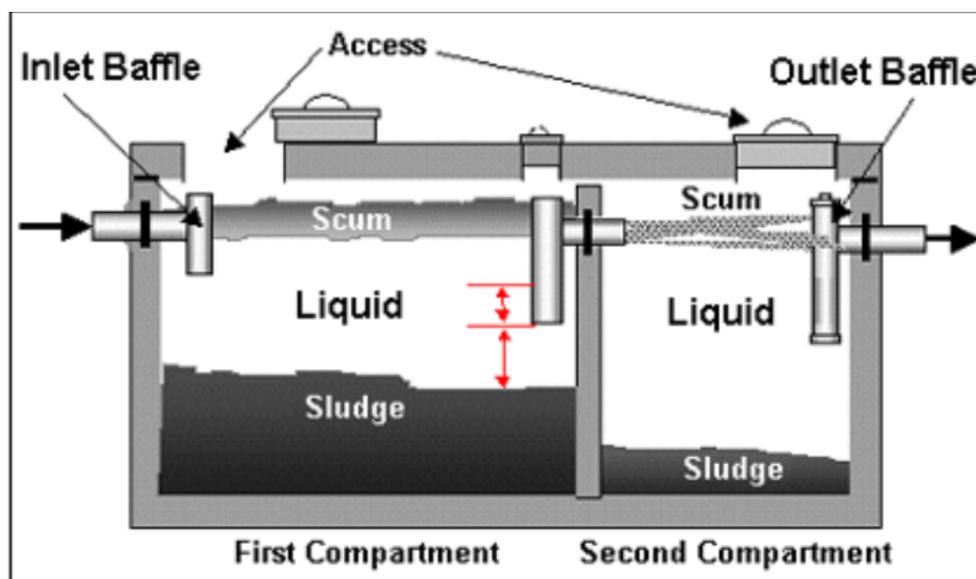
Septic systems work by separating water from fats, oils and sludge in the septic tank. The solids settle to the bottom of the tank and the untreated sewage flows out to a drain field. The sewage is then treated by movement through a column of dry soil.

As an owner, your first step to maintaining your system is to know the location of your homes: Septic Tank, Distribution Box, and Drain field. Be sure to walk the drain field on a regular basis to look for wet spots.



Please note: Septic systems vary. Diagram is not to scale.

One of the most important things you can do to extend the life of your system is to pump the tank on a regular basis!



Inside your tank, fats and oils accumulate on the top of the waterline and solids build up on the bottom. The tank is designed to draw water from the clear area in between and send that clear water out to the leach field. If you wait too long to pump the tank, the two layers converge, and you risk discharging solids, fats, and oils to your leach field where it can clog soil pores and cause the system to fail. When this happens, there is no repair, you must replace the drain field.

Estimated septic tank pumping frequency (in years) for different size tanks for 1 to 6 people in a household of year-round residence. *Note: If a garbage disposal is used, more frequent pumping is required.						
Tank Size (in gallons)	Number of People					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1,000	12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2.0	1.5
1,500	18.9	9.1	5.9	4.2	3.3	2.6
2,000	25.4	12.4	9.1	5.9	4.5	3.7

It is also vital to clean your **Effluent Filter** every 6 months. An effluent filter is a plastic slotted filter that sits in the outlet tee of the septic tank and prevents solid particles from leaving the tank. To clean the effluent filter, open the riser lid over the septic tank outlet and pull the effluent filter out of the outlet tee. Wash the filter off with a hose letting the excess drain back into the tank. You may need a bucket and brush to clean a heavily soiled effluent filter.



Make sure your **Distribution Box** is functioning correctly. Most drain fields in Athens County are controlled by a distribution box. The distribution box ensures that sewage is being directed to each trench equally. If the distribution box settles, effluent could be directed to one or two trenches causing those lines to become overloaded and forcing sewage to the surface of the ground.



Flow Levelers are inserted into each pipe exiting the distribution box. If the box settles, The flow levelers can be adjusted to ensure that water continues flowing into each pipe, and each leach trench equally. If one of the trenches becomes soggy, you can use the flow leveler to shut off the overloaded trench to let it rest.



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This handout was financed through an Ohio EPA Gulf Hypoxia Assistance grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency through an assistance agreement with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. The contents and views, including any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations, contained in this product or publication are those of the authors and have not been subject to any Ohio Environmental Protection Agency or United States Environmental Protection Agency peer or administrative review and may not necessarily reflect the views of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency or the United States Environmental Protection Agency and no official endorsement should be inferred.ext

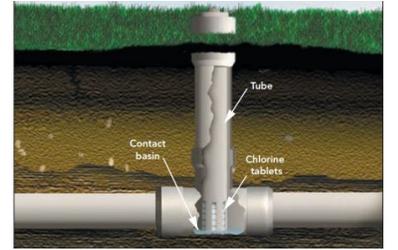
Access - Any shrubbery and/or vegetation around the aerobic system must be maintained to accommodate routine system maintenance and inspection.



Risers- All compartments should have watertight risers properly installed above the ground surface to prevent soil and surface water from entering the system. Risers will allow your system to be easily accessed for service and inspections. Your system will have to be pumped more frequently if soil is allowed to enter. Soil influx can damage the aerator motor, clog the filter, or even create a blockage in the effluent line.



Chlorination - If present, tablets should be placed in the tubes periodically. Use ONLY calcium hypochlorite tablets designed for sewage treatment, NOT pool chlorine tablets.



Your Aeration system may discharge through an open pipe to surface of the ground, or it may discharge to a leachfield via a distribution box.

Discharge - Aerobic systems that discharge to surface water drainage must have outlets that are accessible for inspection. The outlet pipe needs to flow freely. Ideally, there should be 6 inches between the bottom of the discharge pipe and the receiving waterway. The receiving waterway should be maintained so that discharged water keeps moving away.

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