

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINTAINING SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Septic tanks and subsurface seepage fields are advantageous in areas where the natural absorption properties of the soil are satisfactory. The function of a septic tank is to: 1) remove solids, grease and scum which can clog the absorption field. 2) decompose solids by bacterial and natural processes. 3) store sludge and scum.

It is recommended septic tanks be checked for pumping every 3 to 5 years. Periodic pumping of a septic tank is necessary to prevent solids from building up in the tank. If solids are allowed to build up to a point where they enter the field, failure of the subsurface system can occur. **CAUTION: The flushing of any type of diaper, sanitary napkin, or other foreign object into the septic tank can create problems. Fats, oil and grease should be disposed of in the garbage. These products may cause problems to occur in the seepage field.**

Also, it is recommended laundry be done daily rather than all in one day and use low phosphate detergent. Use low-flow toilets, faucets and showerheads if possible.

Additives are not necessary for a septic tank to work properly. Bacteria, which carry out treatment in the tank, are present in the raw sewage. Some chemical additives may be harmful. Acids may cause deterioration of a concrete septic tank. Chlorine bleach can have an impact on the bacteria needed for digestion of waste in the septic tank.

Good surface drainage is important in the area of the seepage field. Driving over the system can damage pipes or cause compaction of the earth which will prevent the natural evaporation of effluent in the soil.

Buildings, above ground pools, patios, etc. should not be placed over the septic system. Plan to have enough reserve space, if possible, to install a second septic system if and when the first one should fail.

Clear water discharges such as those from footing tiles, sump pumps, or roof eaves may not be discharged to the septic tank. These will create an extra demand on the system, which could cause premature failure. It is recommended these types of discharges be directed onto the ground or to a separate field. If discharging to the ground, direct the flow away from the field. All other household waste must discharge to the septic tank. This is wastewater generated from washers, sinks, tubs, stools, showers, and water softeners.

## REPAIRING OR INSTALLING A SEPTIC SYSTEM

If your septic system is not functioning properly, prior to repairing or installing a new system, a permit must be issued from our office. Contact the health department for an application form or download the form from this site. A permit fee is required. An onsite inspection will be conducted by our office prior to backfilling the system. Schedule your inspection 48 hours in advance. A homeowner may install or repair his/her system at their private residence, but they must run the

equipment and be on site. Landlords may not make repairs on rental property. In all cases, a permit must be issued from our office. In most cases a State of Illinois licensed septic contractor will repair or install the system. Licensed contractors may be found in the yellow pages or contact the health department.

If you have any problems or questions, feel free to contact the Logan County Health Department. Our office hours are Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (217) 735-2317.