



Oregon Department of Environmental Quality  
Onsite Program

## Septic System DO's and DON'Ts

A properly constructed and maintained system can last a long time if you follow some common **Septic System DO's and DON'Ts**:

**DON'T** flush material that will not easily decompose, such as hair, diapers, cigarette butts, matches, or feminine hygiene products.

**DON'T** wash or flush medicines or hazardous chemicals like paint, paint thinner and bleach into the system. They kill the bacteria needed to decompose wastes in the septic tank and drain field.

**DON'T** drive over the septic tank or drainfield.

**Don't** flush flushable wipes. Many septic tank pumpers and city public works employees are finding they don't break down and cause serious headaches.

**DON'T** plant anything over or near the drain field except grass. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs may clog and damage drain lines.

**DON'T** dig in your drain field or build anything over it.

**DON'T** cover the drain field with a hard surface such as concrete or asphalt.

**DON'T** make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required permit. Use professionally licensed septic contractors when needed.

**DON'T** use septic tank additives. These products usually do not help and some may even be harmful to your system.

**DON'T** allow backwash from home water softeners or condensate from an air conditioner or heat pump to enter the septic system.

**DON'T** enter your tank. Any work to the tank should be done from outside. Gases that can be generated in the tank and/or oxygen depletion can be fatal.

**DO** conserve water to avoid overloading the system.

**DO** use substitutes for household hazardous waste.

**DO** learn the location of your septic tank and drain field. Keep a sketch of it handy with your maintenance records for service visits.

**DO** cover the drain field with a grass cover to prevent erosion and remove excess water.

**DO** keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumpings. Install risers if necessary.

**DO** keep a detailed record of repairs, pumpings, inspections, permits issued, and other maintenance activities.

**DO** divert other sources of water, like roof drains, house footing drains, and sump pumps, away from the septic system. Excessive water keeps the soil in the drain field from naturally cleansing the wastewater.

**DO** have your septic tank pumped out regularly by a DEQ licensed contractor.

**DO** call a professional whenever you experience problems with your system, or if there are any signs of system failure.