



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT
BUILDING AND CODES DEPARTMENT**

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Septic Systems

Septic systems are designed to treat wastewater by separating solids from liquids and then draining the liquid into the ground. Sewage flows into the tank where settling and bacterial decomposition of larger particles takes place, while treated liquid filters into the soil. When system failures occur, untreated wastewater and sewage can be introduced into groundwater, nearby streams or water bodies.

Pollution prevention practices are designed to limit pollutant discharges from improperly functioning septic systems, and keep the septage from entering local water sources. These discharges occur for a number of reasons, including improper siting, installation, structural failures or by system overloading. Failures may also occur due to lapses in the regular inspection and maintenance required to ensure proper operation during the design life of the septic system. Homeowners may be unaware of the age of their system and whether preemptive planning is necessary before the system fails.

Steps That Can Reduce Pollutant Discharges from Septic Systems:

- Do not wait until septic system shows sign of failure. Inspect the system annually and have it pumped-out at least once every three years.
- Keep records of pumping and maintenance and a map of the location of your septic tank and drainfield.
- Practice water conservation indoors and divert roof drains and surface water away from the system.
- Use caution in disposing materials down the drain. Household chemicals can kill the bacteria that make the system work and non-degradable materials (cigarette butts, etc.) can clog the system.
- Keep heavy equipment and vehicles off your system and drainfield.
- Don't cover your drainfield with impermeable surfaces that can block evaporation and the air needed for effluent treatment.

For more information, please go to:

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Office of Groundwater Protection:

<http://www.state.tn.us/environment/gwp/>