

Establishing, Operating and Maintaining Septic Systems

Public Outreach EDU-6



Source Water Protection is a provincial requirement of the *Clean Water Act* meant to protect our municipal drinking water sources (lakes, rivers and underground) from contamination and overuse.

Be Mindful: Just Because You Can't See It Doesn't Mean You Can Ignore It

Your septic system is located underground. When functioning correctly, it provides a safe, reliable way of treating your household wastewater. But just like your home appliances, roof or furnace, septic systems need maintenance, repair, and eventual replacement. A properly installed and maintained septic system should last 20 to 30 years.



Protecting and Understanding Your Septic System

Do

- Be aware of the location of your septic system and leaching bed.
- Pump septic systems every three to five years and keep records of maintenance performed.
- Get your effluent filter checked and cleaned every year.
- Divert water and your sump pump away from your leaching bed.
- Replace inefficient toilets and shower heads with low-flow models.

Don't

- Flush fats, oils and greases in the drain.
- Dispose of hazardous chemicals, bleaches or pharmaceuticals.
- Use special additives that claim to enhance your system's performance – they are not needed.
- Drive or park over your tank or leaching bed.
- Plant trees and shrubs near the tank or leaching bed.

Speaking of: Septic Systems

Key Tips

Inspections/clean outs of septic systems every three years can help prevent problems. For a small number of properties, an inspection every five years is required under the Building Code, the *Clean Water Act*, *Lake Simcoe Protection Act*, and the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Protection Plan.

Mandatory inspections are required if your property is located in either of the following areas:

- Within 100 metres of the Lake Simcoe shoreline or a body of water within the Lake Simcoe watershed.
- Near a municipal well or surface water intake area.

If your property is in one of these areas, the City of Orillia may contact you to ensure your system is being maintained properly. For more information on septic systems, or on how to get in touch with a qualified septic contractor, contact your local municipality.

Signs of Septic System Failure



- Odours.
- Spongy spots on the leaching bed.
- Sewage on the ground or near the leaching bed.
- Slow moving or backed-up drains at home.
- Not all warning signs are visible above ground – an inspection of the tank is necessary to be certain.

Private Wells Are Your Responsibility

The measures put in place to protect municipal drinking water supplies do not include private drinking water wells. As a private well owner, you still need to regularly test your water and maintain your well. If you have any health concerns about your well water, contact your local district health unit.



Failing Septic Systems Contaminate Drinking Water

Septic systems that are failing can release waste and bacteria into the ground and contaminate groundwater or nearby surface water. Your drinking water comes from these sources. If they are contaminated the safety of our water may be compromised. A failed septic system causes expensive repairs. Regular maintenance will extend the life of your system and save you money!

Contact Information

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