

## Protect Your Investment

A properly functioning septic system helps your property retain its value. Follow these steps to help your system provide years of effective wastewater treatment.

**Monitor** your septic system to ensure that it is functioning properly. Get the solid levels in your septic tank checked periodically. The septic tank should be pumped out when the tank is 1/3 full of solids.

**Maintain** your septic tank by having it pumped out every 3 to 5 years or more often if required. The frequency of pumping depends on the size of your septic tank and the number of users in your household. Removing solids (settled sludge and floating scum) from your septic tank prevents particles from entering the drainfield and soil which is a major cause of a system failure.

**Reduce** the amount of water going into your system. Excessive water can flush solids into the drainfield and saturate the soils which can affect drainage and bacterial action.

**Refrain** from putting non-biodegradable materials down your drains. Using your toilet like a garbage by flushing facial tissue, dental floss, and other solids can clog your drainfield. Some chemicals and cleaners kill the beneficial bacteria in your septic tank, requiring you to have your tank pumped more often. Harmful chemicals can also be carried from your septic field into watercourses and drinking wells.


## Contact An Authorized Person to Maintain or Repair Your System

Under the provincial Sewerage System Regulation only an Authorized Person may install or repair a septic system. An Authorized Person may be a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner (ROWP) registered through the Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC (ASTTBC) or a Professional Engineer or Geoscientist registered through the Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (EGBC).

**Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC  
Onsite Wastewater Registration Program**  
604-585-2788  
<https://asttbc.org/registrants/registrator-directory/>

**Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia**  
1-888-430-8035  
[www.egbc.ca/Member-Directories/Professionals-for-Sewerage-System-Regulation](http://www.egbc.ca/Member-Directories/Professionals-for-Sewerage-System-Regulation)

Regional District of Nanaimo  
Wastewater Services

 250-390-6560  
250-954-3792

 [rcu@rdn.bc.ca](mailto:rcu@rdn.bc.ca)

 [septicmart.ca](http://septicmart.ca)

# SepticSmart



## Get to Know Your Septic System



## Get to Know Your Septic System

A septic system receives all household wastewater including wastewater from toilets, showers, dishwashers, washing machines, and other plumbing fixtures. Its job is to treat the wastewater so it may safely return to the groundwater and soil.

A basic septic system is made up of these main components:

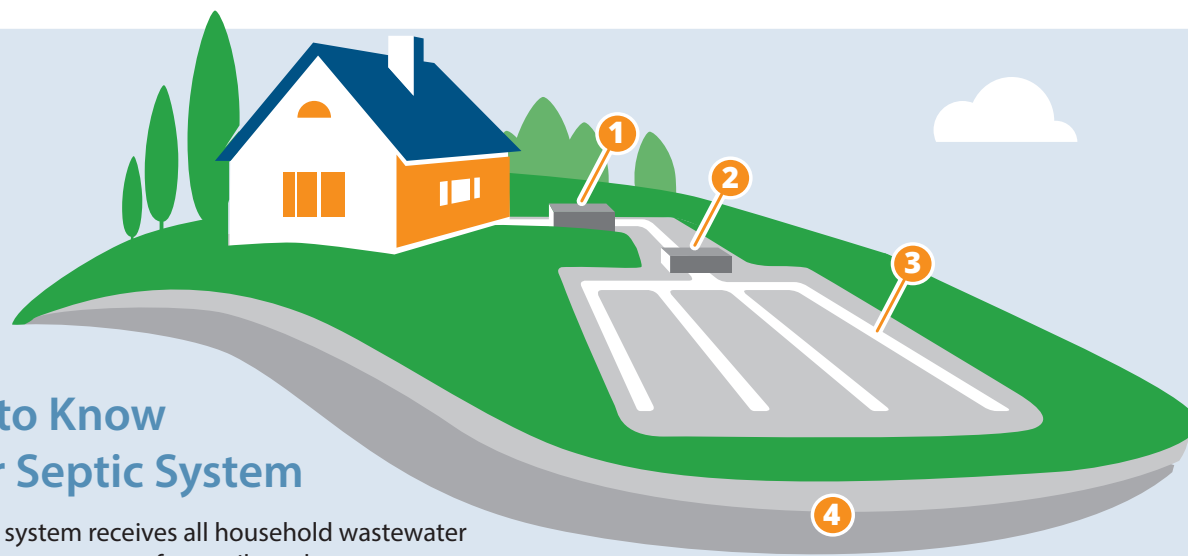
- 1 Septic tank** – The tank's main job is to separate the liquid from the solids and oils that can clog the drainfield. By itself, the tank doesn't provide a high level of treatment.
- 2 Distribution box** – When present, a distribution box should distribute effluent evenly to the drainfield pipes. A tilted or damaged distribution box will distribute the effluent unevenly. Over time, this could cause your drainfield to fail, leading to costly repairs.

## Stop, Look, Smell

Some signs of septic system malfunctions are easy to spot:

- Sewage surfacing over the drainfield.
- Lush, green growth or soggy areas over the drainfield.
- Slow or backed up drains, toilets or sinks.
- Sewage odours around the property.

If you notice a problem with your system, contact an Authorized Person (see back page) for advice. Repairs can include pumping out the septic tank, repairing a broken tank baffle or cracked pipe, replacing the distribution box, replacing the septic tank, or replacing the drainfield.

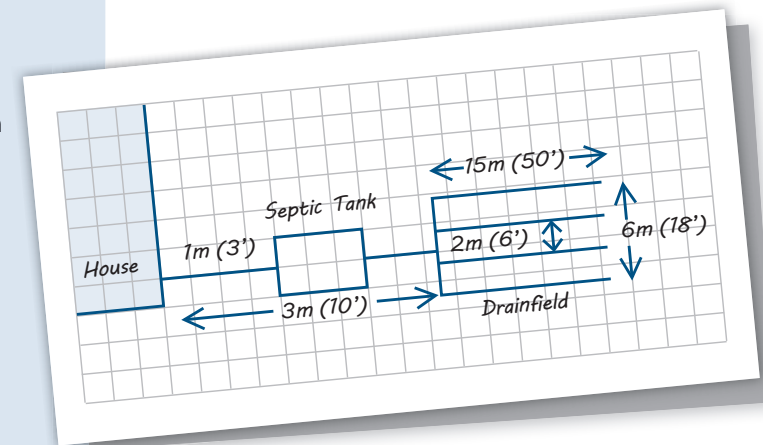


- 3 Drainfield** – A drainfield is a network of underground perforated pipes that work with the soil filter. Small holes in the drainfield pipes allow the wastewater to seep into the soil. For the drainfield to work effectively over the long term, each pipe must receive an equal flow of effluent.
- 4 Soil filter** – Naturally-occurring bacteria in the soil filter and treat the effluent. When it finally reaches the water table, the wastewater has been treated. Most of the treatment “work” of a septic system happens in the soil. Grass above helps draw moisture away so the soil can continue to accept and treat effluent.

## Locate and Mark Your Septic System

Locate your system and mark its components. This will help you protect your system, monitor its performance, and respond quickly to emergencies if they arise. It may help to keep a simple sketch of your septic system on hand which identifies the location of the system in relation to the house.

Consider installing watertight risers over the septic tank to identify its location and provide surface access to buried components.



If you don't know where your system is, contact your local **Island Health** office for an as-built diagram of your system:

### Nanaimo Office:

3rd Floor, 6475 Metral Drive  
250-755-6215

### Parksville Office:

489 Alberni Highway  
250-947-8222

RDN Building and Bylaw Services (250-390-6530) may store Island Health's "Authorizations to Operate" for some properties. Note, a file search fee is charged and results are not guaranteed.