

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **What about ongoing maintenance of my septic system?**

If you have an aerobic, secondary treatment septic system, you will need an ongoing maintenance contract throughout the life of the system with a Town of Bartonville registered maintenance provider. The maintenance provider will perform at least three inspections per year on your system to ensure it is working properly.

## **Is there anything I am required to do or is all maintenance done professionally?**

Typically, all of the maintenance and inspections are completed by a licensed maintenance provider. For systems that require on-going maintenance, there is typically a requirement for some type of disinfection, such as chlorination. The maintenance contract is required to identify who is responsible for maintaining chlorine in the system.

Additionally, a homeowner spends more time around the system and should be observant concerning odors, wet areas, overly green grass in dry times, etc. One key item for homeowners or occupants to remember is that most of these systems are equipped with audible and visual alarms. In the event of an issue, the alarm will sound and a light (typically red) will shine.

Lastly, the resident is responsible for contacting the maintenance provider for:

- contract concerns: renewals, initial contract, cancellations
- to report problems or failures with the system
- copies of inspection reports or other documentation

## **I've heard I shouldn't use a garbage disposal. Why is that?**

Garbage disposals have a dramatic impact on how often you'll need to pump your septic tank. Food particles usually are not digested by the bacteria and accumulate as scum. If a large amount of water enters the tank, it can push the food particles into the drain or spray field, causing clogging. If you must use a garbage disposal, your tank will need to be pumped more frequently.

## **I've been in my house for 10+ years and have never pumped my septic tank. Should I be concerned?**

Over time, sludge and scum build up in the septic tank, and, unless it is removed, it will flow into the drain field clogging the soil and lines. Once a drain field is clogged, it must be replaced, which is an expensive repair costing anywhere from \$2,000-\$10,000 or more.

## **What happens when a septic system fails? How can I tell?**

Usually when a septic system fails, the drain or spray field is not functioning properly. When a septic tank overflows, the effluent can pass to the drain or spray field, clogging pipes and sprinkler heads. This can cause sinks and toilets to back up in the house. Other signs include: slow draining toilets and drains, an odor of sewage, wet area on or near the drain field, wet or muddy area near the sprinkler heads on spray fields.

## **How can I prevent a septic failure?**

Maintenance, maintenance, maintenance! If your system has been properly designed and installed, the rest is up to you, as the homeowner. Pump your septic tank as needed, have your system inspected regularly (for aerobic systems, this requires an ongoing maintenance contract to have

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the system inspected three times a year), avoid excess water use, and watch what you put down the drain and flush down the toilet.

### **Do I need to obtain a permit to repair my septic system?**

Yes. With few exceptions, Texas law requires an approved permit to repair any type of septic system. This law is intended to assure that the person making the repairs is experienced and understands the correct procedures and processes for repairing a system. The law is in place to protect the environment as well as the homeowner and his neighbors.

Septic contractors are required to be licensed by the State as well as registered with the Town of Bartonville. Please be sure to ask your contractor about their current Town registration when starting a project.

### **What environmental issues are most important regarding septic systems?**

As population increases in any area, the concern of where, how much, and of what quality septic effluent of these home has on the environment increases. The simple fact is that all of the septic waste water winds up in the environment. If we are lucky, it is safe and stays where we want it. As it either evaporates or seeps into the earth, we expect it to do no harm to the land, waters of the land, and the people living nearby.

### **I am adding on to my house. What do I do? Does this affect my septic system?**

If you are on septic and adding to your house, you will need to submit the addition plans as well as the septic plans to the Town. The Town Sanitarian will determine if your current septic system can handle the proposed addition. More square footage, or extra bathrooms, or extra bedrooms all affect the septic system and the required area for a drain or spray field.

### **How do I register a complaint concerning septic?**

First and foremost, complainant names are required to be confidential. If you have a complaint regarding a septic system or discharge, please contact the Town of Bartonville at 817-693-5280. Complainants are asked to leave their contact information so that the inspector can obtain more specifics concerning the case.

Upon receipt of the complaint the inspector will investigate the issues. If there is a violation, the inspector will issue a notice to correct the violation. It is important to note that there are various compliance times and that the problem may not stop immediately. In addition, many times the source of the problem may not be immediately known and may take some investigation by the inspector, homeowner/occupant, and/or a third party professional.