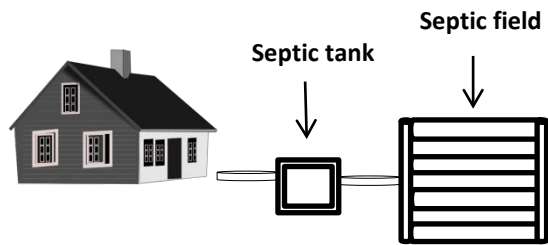


OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

On-site sewage disposal during and after a flood



- Whenever the water table is high, or your on-site sewage disposal system is threatened by flooding, there is a risk that sewage will back up into your home. **The only way to prevent this backup is to relieve pressure on the system by using it less.**
- Do not use your on-site sewage disposal system until water in the septic field is lower than the water level around the house.
- Have your septic tank professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage.
 - Signs of damage include holes in the ground or soil settling in the area of your septic tank and field, toilets flushing slowly and water backing up into your home.
 - Most septic tanks are not damaged by flooding since they are below ground and completely covered. However, septic tanks and pump chambers can fill with silt and debris, and must be professionally cleaned. If the soil absorption field is clogged with silt, a new system may have to be installed.
- By law only licensed professionals can pump or repair septic tanks. Tanks may contain dangerous gases that can be fatal.
- Have the septic tank pumped by a licensed professional as soon as possible after the flood. Be sure to pump both the tank and lift station (if applicable). This will remove silt and debris that may have washed into the system.
 - **Do not pump the tank when flood waters are still present or when the soil around your septic system is still very wet (saturated).** At best, pumping the tank is only a temporary solution. Under worst conditions, pumping it out could cause the tank to float out of the ground and may damage the inlet and outlet pipes.
- Do not compact the soil over the septic field by driving or operating equipment in the area.
 - Saturated soil is especially susceptible to compaction, which can reduce the soil absorption field's ability to treat wastewater and lead to system failure.
- Have a licensed electrician examine all electrical connections for damage before restoring electricity.
- Be sure the septic tank's manhole cover is secure and that inspection ports (if present) have not been blocked or damaged.
- Check the vegetation over your septic tank and septic field.
 - Repair erosion damage and sod or reseed areas as necessary to provide turf grass cover.

Remember: Whenever the water table is high or your sewage system is threatened by flooding there is a risk that sewage will back up into your home. The only way to prevent this backup is to relieve pressure on the system by using it less.

<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/septic-systems-what-do-after-flood>