

## The Dos & Don'ts of Household Wastewater Treatment Systems:

**DO** ensure that wastewater treatment systems are installed in accordance with EPA guidance and planning conditions;

**DO** de-sludge when necessary;

**DO** use bleaches and disinfectants sparingly, as they could kill the bacteria which help digest the waste;

**DO** use phosphate-free detergents which substitute zeolites for phosphates;

**DON'T** allow rainwater to enter the septic tank / treatment system;

**DON'T** use food macerators on the outlet of the kitchen sink;

**DON'T** discharge oils fats or grease down the kitchen sink;

**DON'T** allow pesticides, paints, thinners, solvents, disinfectants or household hazardous substances to discharge to the septic tank / treatment system;

**DON'T** enter the confined space of a septic tank for inspection or any other purpose.



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Protecting Drinking Water Supplies  
& Groundwater Resources

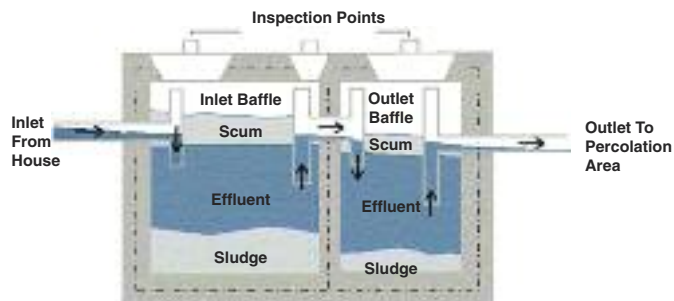
Septic Tank & Wastewater Treatment  
System Guidelines

## Setting the Scene

- One third of Ireland's population relies upon on-site wastewater treatment and disposal systems discharging to groundwaters;
- 250,000m<sup>3</sup> (55 million gallons) of wastewater is discharged to groundwater every day in Ireland;
- Over 50% of tapwater in County Kilkenny comes from groundwater;
- Poorly installed and poorly maintained on-site wastewater treatment systems have potential to cause serious environmental pollution and contamination of drinking water supplies.

## How can I recognise if my septic tank / treatment system is not working properly?

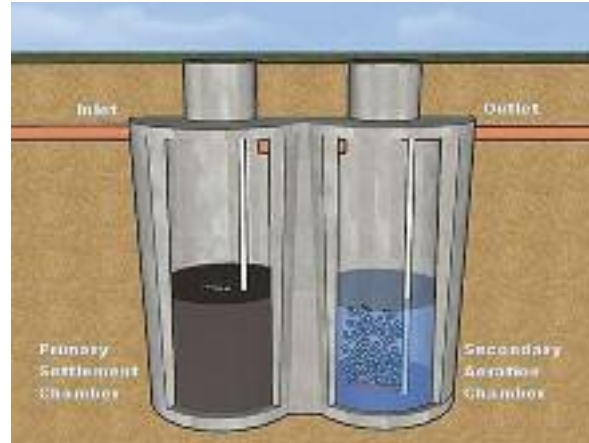
- Slowly draining toilets, baths, sinks, etc.;
- Surface ponding of malodorous effluent "downstream" of the septic tank;
- Signs of pollution in nearby ditches or watercourses;
- Vigorous plant growth "downstream" of the septic tank ;
- Septic tank system continues to operate with no maintenance requirements whatsoever.



Typical Septic Tank

## Is maintenance of my septic tank / treatment system essential?

YES



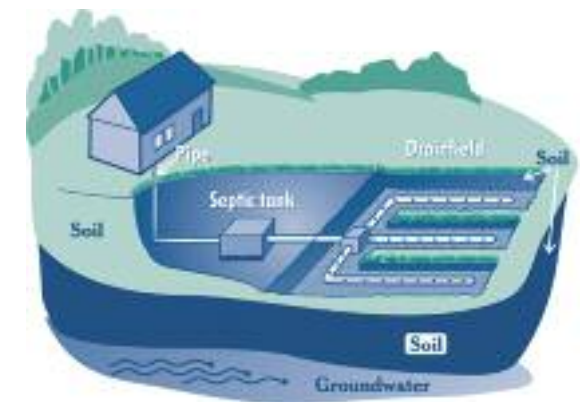
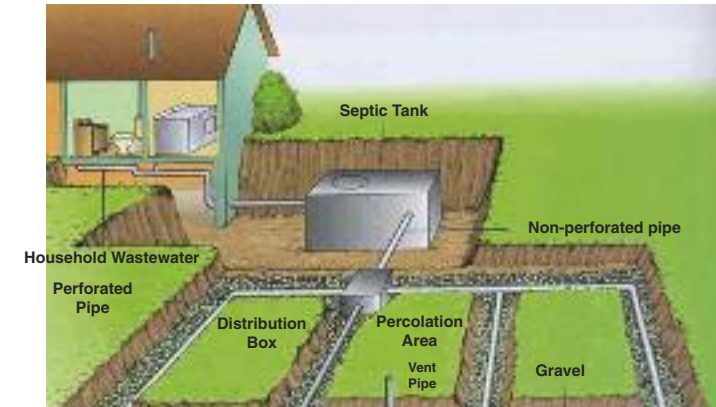
Typical Treatment System

- While the planning process provides for the careful design and choice of treatment system, ongoing maintenance of that system is of equal importance;
- Conventional septic tank systems, typically, should be desludged every 2 years;
- A visual inspection of a septic tank should be undertaken every six months checking sludge and scum levels, structural soundness / watertightness, baffles, screens and distribution box;
- Treatment systems require regular maintenance and generally require a maintenance contract with the supplier or suitably qualified service agency.

## How important is my percolation area?

VERY IMPORTANT

- The most important component of a conventional septic tank is the percolation area.
- The percolation area should be kept free from vehicles, heavy animals, sports activities or other activities likely to break the sod on the surface.
- The percolation area should be inspected every 6 months to ensure that no surface damage is visible. The aeration / ventilation pipes should also be inspected.



Sections through typical percolation area