



More than 25 million homes, encompassing almost 25% of the US population, dispose of wastewater through private onsite (unsewered) systems.

One of the major differences between owning a private onsite wastewater system (POWTS) and a sewer home is that a POWTS must be maintained by the homeowner.

***Treatment and disposal of wastewater should be one of the primary concerns of any homeowner.***

## How Does a POWTS work?

A typical septic system contains two major components: a septic tank and the absorption field. The septic tank is usually made of concrete, fiberglass, or plastic, is typically buried and should be watertight.

Septic tanks are typically designed to hold a minimum of 750-1000 gallons of sewage. The size of the tank may vary depending upon the number of bedrooms in the home and state and local regulatory requirements.

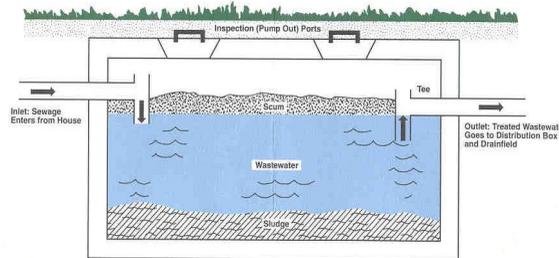
The primary purpose of a septic tank is to separate the solids, known as sludge, collect on the bottom of the tank, while the scum floats on the top of the liquid. The sludge and the scum remain in the tank and should be pumped out periodically.

Solids that are allowed to pass from the septic tank may clog the absorption field. Therefore, an additional safeguard in keeping solids out of the absorption field (drainfield/leachfield) is the use of effluent filters on the outlet of the septic tank.

Wastewater (effluent) coming out of the septic tank may contain many potentially disease-causing microorganisms and pollutants.

## How to Prevent Problems

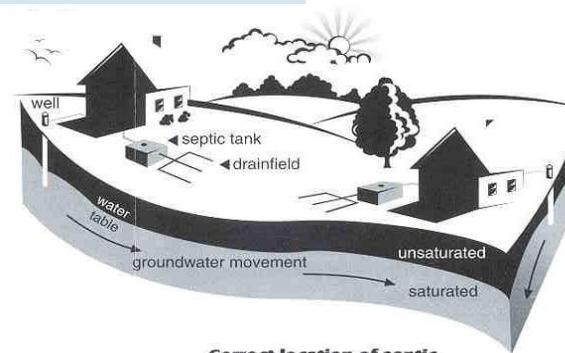
-  Before installation is complete, have the septic tank tested for watertightness.
-  Maintain your septic system by having it inspected and pumped regularly.
-  Conserve water in your home by using low-flow fixtures and by implementing water conservation practices to avoid hydraulic overload of your septic system.
-  Redirect surface water flow away from your soil absorption field.
-  Do not drive vehicles or heavy equipment over the absorption field. This will compact the soil and reduce its ability to absorb water.



-  Plant a greenbelt (grassy strip or small, short-rooted vegetation) between your soil absorption field and the shoreline of any nearby surface water body.
-  Keep chemicals and other hazardous wastes out of the septic system.
-  If you have a drinking water well, have it tested yearly for contaminants. If you suspect a contamination problem, have it tested more often.

## What to Put In, What to Keep Out

-  Direct all wastewater from your home into the septic tank. This includes all sink, bath, shower, toilet, washing machine and dishwasher wastewaters. Any of these waters can contain disease-causing microorganisms or environmental pollutants.
-  Keep roof drains, basement sump pump drains, and other rainwater or surface water drainage systems away from the absorption field. Flooding of the absorption field with excessive water will keep the soil from naturally cleansing the wastewater, which can lead to groundwater and/or nearby surface water pollution.
-  Use commercial bathroom cleaners and laundry detergents in moderation. Many people prefer to clean their toilets, sinks, showers, and tubs with a mild detergent or baking soda.
-  Conserve water to avoid overloading the septic system. Be sure to repair any leaky faucets or toilets. Use low-flow fixtures.
-  Do not use septic tank additives, commercial septic tank cleansers, yeast sugar, etc. These products are not necessary and some may be harmful to your system.



Correct location of septic

-  Eliminating the use of a garbage disposal can reduce the amount of grease and solids entering the septic tank and possibly clogging the drainfield.
-  Your septic system is not a trash can. **DO NOT** put grease, disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms, paper towels, plastics, cat litter, latex paint, pesticides, or other hazardous chemicals into your system.
-  Keep records of repairs, pumpings, inspections, permits issued, and other system maintenance activities.
-  Learn the location of your septic system. Keep a sketch of it handy with your maintenance record for service visits.
-  Have your septic system inspected every 1-2 years and pumped periodically (every 3 years) by a licensed inspector/contractor.
-  Plant **ONLY** grass over and near your septic system. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs may clog and damage the absorption field.
-  Do not drive or park over any part of your septic system. This can compact the soil and crush your system.

For more information about your septic system, you can contact the **Sauk County Planning & Zoning Office @ 608-355-3285**

Or your **septic installer** – who was: