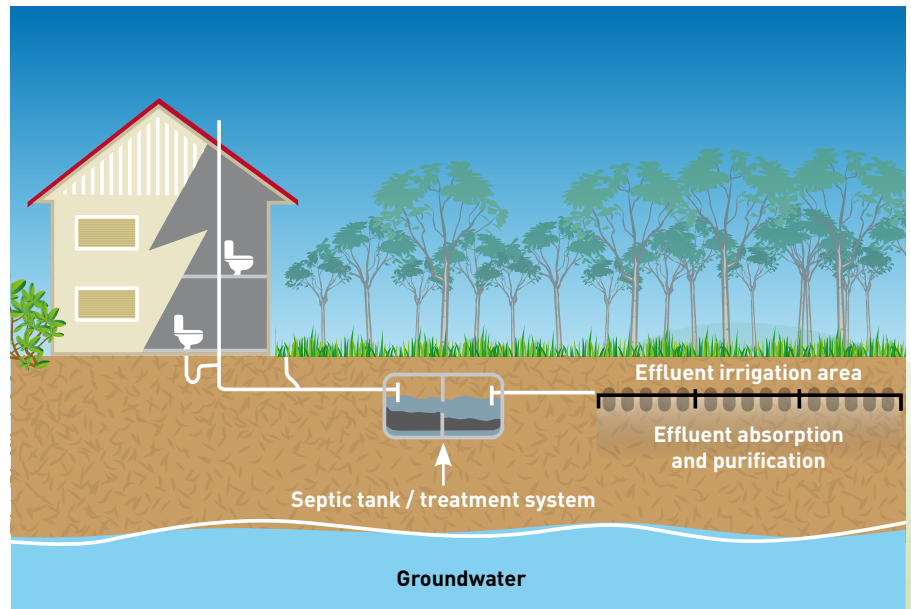


Did you know a failing septic or domestic wastewater treatment system can have serious impacts on human health and the environment?

Failing systems can spread infectious diseases, attract pests (mosquitoes, flies and rodents) and contribute to the pollution of groundwater, streams and waterways. Ensuring that your system is maintained, while also being a legal requirement, can save you money in the cost of repair or early replacement of your system.



A typical layout of a house served by treatment system



An operational septic system

Types of Facilities

The main types of onsite wastewater treatment systems in use today include:

- Primary Treatment Systems (Septic Tanks) which are the most basic type of system
- Secondary Treatment Systems - which provide a higher level of treatment and increased human and environmental safety



A failing system can have a serious impact on the the environment.



Protect the Bacteria in Your Systems

Wastewater treatment systems rely on bacteria to break down household wastewater. In order to maintain the health of the bacteria in your system it is recommended that you:

- ✓ Use biodegradable soaps
- ✓ Use low-phosphorus and low-sodium detergents
- ✗ Avoid using powerful bleaches, whiteners and disinfectants
- ✗ Avoid putting hazardous chemicals into your system e.g. paints
- ✗ Avoid putting solids into your system e.g. food scraps, sanitary napkins
- ✓ Clean out grease traps regularly

How to protect the health of your system

Conserve Water

Water conservation can reduce the load on your system, improve treatment efficiency and prolong the lifespan of your system. Space out large water use (washing machine and dishwasher use) as this will ensure your system does not overload.

Isolate and Protect Your Effluent Irrigation Area

Effluent irrigation areas (such as trenches, spray or sub-surface areas) can be the source of pollution which can be harmful to humans and the environment. To minimise the risks associated with your irrigation area ensure that:

- Children do not play on or near the irrigation area
- Pedestrian access through the area is minimised
- Effluent does not come into contact with:
 - Swimming pools, dams, streams or waterways
 - Edible plants
 - Neighbouring property
- Any grass in the irrigation area is regularly mowed (though refrain from mowing during wet weather or peak use times)
- Vehicle and stock movement over the irrigation area is minimised
- Sprinklers (for spray irrigation) are shifted regularly
- Deep rooted vegetation is not planted over irrigation areas which contain sub-surface pipes

How to ensure your system is working correctly

Ensuring that your system is working correctly requires a combination of regular monitoring by yourself and regular maintenance by a licensed contractor.

Maintenance

No matter which treatment system you own, ensuring that it is regularly checked by a licensed contractor is essential.

For Primary Treatment Systems it is recommended that your system is checked and pumped out by a licensed contractor when scum and sludge occupy 2/3 of the volume of the tank (usually every 3-5 years).

For Secondary and Advanced Secondary Treatment Systems, due to the complexity and legal requirements of the systems, it is recommended that you contact a licensed service agent so a maintenance schedule can be arranged.

Monitoring your system

Early warning signs that your system is failing include:

- Unusual smells
- Ponding, leaks, damp or soggy ground
- Toilet backs up or is slow to drain
- Overflowing pump well
- Dark green grass in the effluent irrigation area

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