

## Septic Tank FAQ Sheet

*Why am I being required to have my septic system pumped out or inspected before the septic tank is full?*

Research has shown that failing septic tank systems contribute to considerable amounts of pollution to groundwater and the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. By having your septic tank pumped before it is full, the number of solids leaving the tank and moving into the drain field is really reduced, allowing your drain field to function as designed for a much longer amount of time.

*Who do I contact to have my septic system pumped out or inspected?*

You may contact any sewage handler license to operate within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

*Why should I have my septic tank pumped?*

Regularly pumping your septic tank will increase the tank's lifespan and overall health. Heavier substances settle at the bottom of a septic tank, eventually forming a layer of sludge. If the sludge layer builds up beyond the recommended level, your septic tank can begin to leak out resulting in solid substances leaking into the ground, as well as septic tank malfunction.

1. Properly maintaining your septic tank will increase your septic tanks lifespan and health
2. Regularly pumping your septic tank can help catch problems in advance
3. Neglecting your septic tank can lead to costly damages

*What are the signs that my septic tank is full?*

- Your drains are taking longer than usual
- Water is pooled up over your septic tank
- Bad smells are coming from your yard

*How often should I pump my septic tank?*

Septic tank pumping depends on various factors such as appropriateness of use and the amount of wastewater. However, experts recommend pumping your septic tank every 3-5 years.

*If I have had my septic tank pumped within the last 5 years, do I need to have it pumped out again in order to comply with the County's pump out program?*

No. If your septic has been pumped out within the last 5 years, you only need to fill out the enclosed verification and compliance form and attach a copy of a receipt, cancelled check, or other documentation signed by a licensed sewage handler, noting when the system was pumped.

*What if I have multiple septic tank systems on my property?*

If you have more than one septic system located on a single parcel of land, you will need to make copies of the verification and compliance form for that parcel and complete one copy of the form for each system.

*What if I own property with a septic system, but the property has remained vacant for more than 5 years?*

The property owner will need to provide a notarized letter stating that the property has not been in use for more than 5 years and will provide information regarding the last septic pump-out.

*How do I maintain my septic tank after pumping?*

- Schedule routine inspection and maintenance.
- Do NOT drive or park over the drainfield area.
- Do NOT plant any trees or shrubs within 30 feet of your septic tank or drainfield.
- Do NOT excessively water the lawn over the drainfield area.
- Do NOT put grease, hygiene products, wipes, paper towels, oil, paint, antifreeze, pesticides, or other strong chemicals down your sink or toilet.

What does a healthy septic tank look like versus one that is in poor condition?

