



FLOODS

SEPTIC SYSTEMS – WHAT TO DO AFTER A FLOOD

Where can I find information on my septic system?

Please contact Northeast Tri County Health District for advice and assistance if you don't already know specifics about your septic system. Permit information is kept that identifies location of your septic tank and drainfield. Additionally, newer systems installed within flood prone areas have guidance, specific to the system, about maintenance and operation of the systems after a flood. You can request these records by contacting any of our offices or by completing a "Sewage Record Search Request Form" found on our website www.netchd.org.

Do I pump my tank during or right after a flood?

No! 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. Recently installed tanks may float of the ground more readily than older systems because the soil has not had enough time to settle and compact. The best solution is to plug all drains in the basement and drastically reduce water use in the house.

What do I do with my septic system after the flood?

Once floodwaters have receded, there are several things homeowners should remember:

- Do not put the sewage system back into normal use until flood waters have receded and an evaluation of the septic system is made.
- Evaluate the sewage system for damage. Signs of damage include settling or an inability to accept water. 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 by a certified pumper. If the drainfield is clogged with silt, a new permitted system may have to be installed.
- Contact Northeast Tri County Health District for a list of certified pumpers, and if needed, a list of certified installers. If a new system is needed, Health District staff can help you move quickly through the permitting process.
- If sewage has backed up into the basement, clean the area and disinfect the floor. Use a chlorine solution of a half cup of chlorine bleach to each gallon of water to disinfect the area thoroughly. Use appropriate caution when using chlorine bleach and read the manufacturer's instructions.
- Do not compact the soil over the soil absorption 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.
- Examine all electrical connections for damage before restoring electricity. Contact a licensed electrician if electrical repair work is needed.
- Be sure the septic tanks manhole cover is secure and that inspection ports have not been blocked or damaged.
- Check the vegetation over your septic tank and soil absorption 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.

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