

Septic System Do's and Don'ts

The septic tanks trap the solids so only the effluent water flows into the leach field, where it percolates through the soil which cleanses it. It's a simple system that only works if you take care of it. Your septic system's health and maintenance is your responsibility, and it can have environmental consequences beyond the boundaries of your property. Therefore, the CRE Metro District **pays for and schedules annual homeowner septic system inspections and pumping of the tanks when recommended** by the septic contractor. Homeowners are responsible for any noted and required repairs and for notifying the CRE community manager upon their completion. Attention to these guidelines **can save you from a pre-mature \$50,000+ expense** to replace your leach field.

Septic Do's and Don'ts:

Do's:

- Strictly minimize cooking grease and oils from entering the septic system (e.g., the kitchen drain) as these will significantly shorten the life of your leach field.
- **Septic tank "additives" are not required or desired** in these systems.
- Limit the use of drain solvents, household chemicals and chlorine as they can inhibit bacterial action, causing rapid buildup of solids in the tank. Moderate, occasional use of these substances is fine.
- Quickly fix any plumbing issues to avoid a constant water input (e.g., a leaky toilet or malfunctioning water softener). Septic systems can handle a limited amount of water in a 24-hour period, and they last longer if water conservation is practiced.
- Spread out large water usages, such as laundry loads throughout the week.
- **To Extend the Life of Your Leach Field:**
 - Remove shrubs and mow grasses to minimize root invasion and blockages.
 - **Alternate leach field zones** by closing one of the zone valves for 6 months, then reopen it and close the next valve. Continue to repeat this valve rotation cycle to allow zones to "rest" and dry out.
- Cooperate with the CRE Metro District when they schedule your tanks to be pumped.

Don't: Dispose of sanitary napkins, tampons, diapers, paper towels, cooking oil, grease, solvents, paint, etc. in your septic system. Garbage disposals should be used sparingly in connection with a septic system. Coffee grounds, fats, and meats should never be run through your garbage disposal into a septic system.

Don't: Add septic additives! Use of these guidelines will ensure a healthy and stable bacterial population which is vital to the breakdown of the solids.

Don't: Park or drive vehicles over any part of your septic system.

Don't: Plant large shrubs or trees near the septic area as roots can cause damage to the pipes.

Don't: Place sprinkler systems close to the leach field. All surface water runoff should be directed away from this area to prevent further saturation of the soil.

These guidelines will help protect your expensive leach field by preventing oils, roots, over saturation, etc., from damaging the absorption capacity of the soils. When the field is no longer able to adequately absorb fluids, it must be replaced (costing tens of thousands of dollars). With proper care and maintenance, the septic tanks will only require pumping about every 2 – 4 years.

Failing septic systems have the potential to risk human health through the exposure to raw sewage and the contamination of ground water supplies. If you have questions about an improperly functioning septic system, please call Douglas County Septic at **303-791-7716** or any other septic contractor of your choice.