

What is a septic system?

A residential septic system is an on-site tank and leaching field located on your property that is used for treating all the wastewater from your house, which includes drainage from your dishwasher, washing machine, toilets, showers and sinks. Poorly functioning or failing residential septic systems can be a source of water pollution; they can leak sewage that contains pathogens and nutrients, which are then carried by stormwater to rivers, lakes and streams. By following a few simple tips, you can maintain your septic system to maximize its efficiency, reduce problems and potential expenses and help to protect our waterways!

Not sure if you have a septic system?

Contact your county health department to check if you have one and verify its location on your property.



The Clean Water Campaign

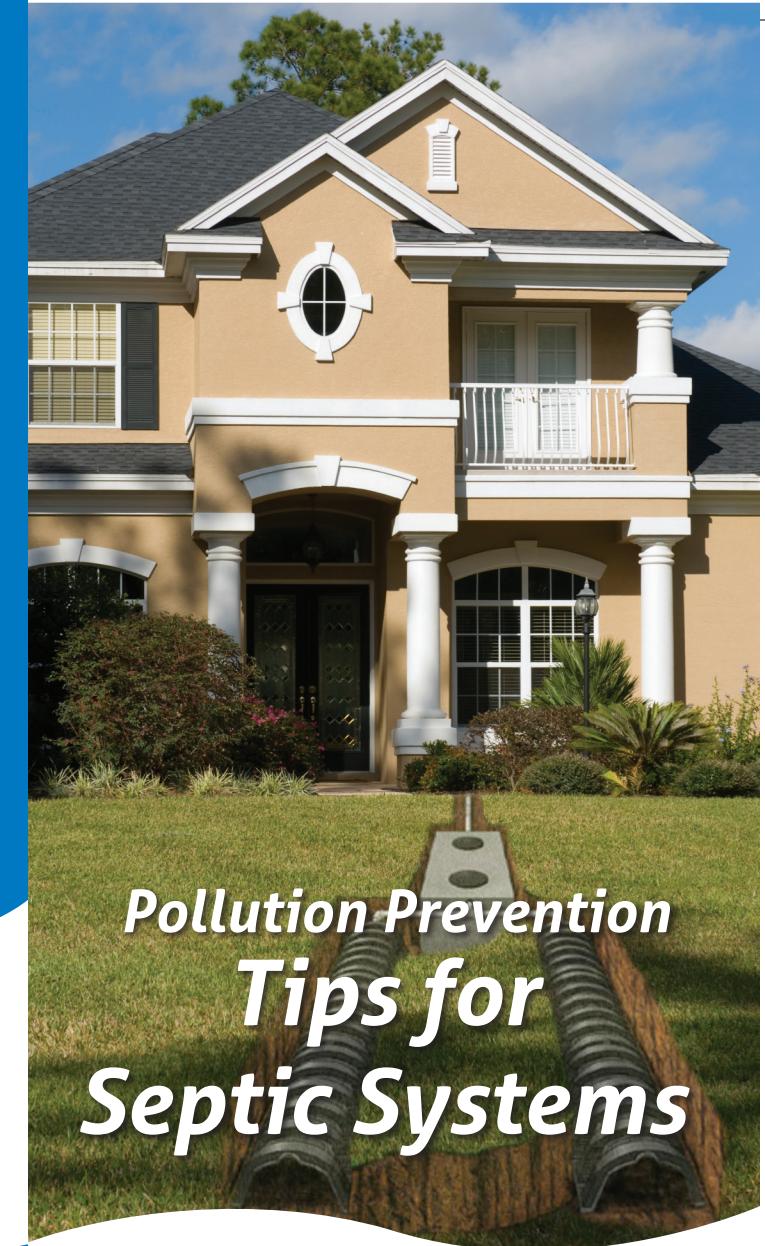
The Clean Water Campaign is a collaborative multi-agency education and outreach effort coordinated by the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District for the 15-county Metro Atlanta area. The Clean Water Campaign's mission is to build awareness of water quality problems and solutions.

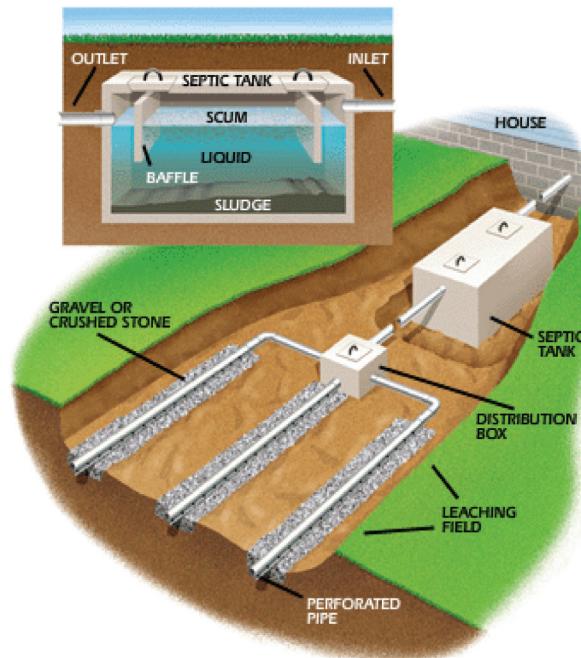


The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District serves as the water planning organization for the greater metropolitan Atlanta area, which encompasses the following counties and their respective municipalities: Bartow, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Forsyth, Gwinnett, Hall, Henry, Paulding and Rockdale.

Clean Water Campaign

www.cleanwatercampaign.com





How Does Your Septic System Work?

A typical home septic system consists of two parts: the septic tank and the leaching field.

- ◆ Wastewater from your home enters the septic tank. Solids settle to the bottom of the septic tank and are broken down by beneficial bacteria.
- ◆ Liquid from the septic tank flows out into the leaching field where it slowly seeps into the soil. Beneficial bacteria in the soil and natural filtration through the ground finish the job of treating the wastewater from your home.
- ◆ Sludge (non-digestible solids) remains in the tank and eventually needs to be pumped out.

Household Tips for Septic System Owners

- ◆ Flush only human waste and toilet paper down the toilet!
- ◆ Never flush diapers, feminine hygiene products, condoms, cigarette butts or cat litter down your toilet – these items will not break down in the septic tank and may end up clogging the system.
- ◆ Don't dispose of household chemicals, oil based paints, solvents or additives like emulsifiers and degreasers down the drain.
- ◆ Minimize the use of a garbage disposal by disposing of food wastes in the trash, and avoid pouring fats and grease down the drain.
- ◆ Reduce the amount of wastewater going to your septic system by taking shorter showers, running full loads of laundry and repairing leaks. You will conserve water while at the same time prevent the flooding of your leaching field.
- ◆ Space out laundry loads over several days. Doing multiple loads of laundry in one day can overload your septic system.



Failing septic system

Septic System Maintenance

- ◆ Septic systems should be inspected at least every three years by a certified contractor.
- ◆ When sludge in the tank reaches a certain point, the tank will need to be pumped out as recommended by your inspector.
- ◆ Never plant trees or other vegetation other than turf grass over your leaching field.
- ◆ Avoid overwatering the grass over the leaching field – doing so will saturate the ground and reduce the ability of the wastewater to percolate into the soil.
- ◆ Direct downspouts or other drainage away from the septic tank and leaching field to avoid creating overly damp soil conditions.

Signs that Something is WRONG!

- ◆ Sinks, showers or tubs that drain slowly.
- ◆ A strong odor in your home or outdoors near the leaching field.
- ◆ Wet, spongy ground near the septic tank or leaching field.

If you notice a problem, contact a septic system professional or your county health department as soon as possible. Don't know the number of your local county health department? Call 404-657-6534 or go to www.dph.georgia.gov for more information.