



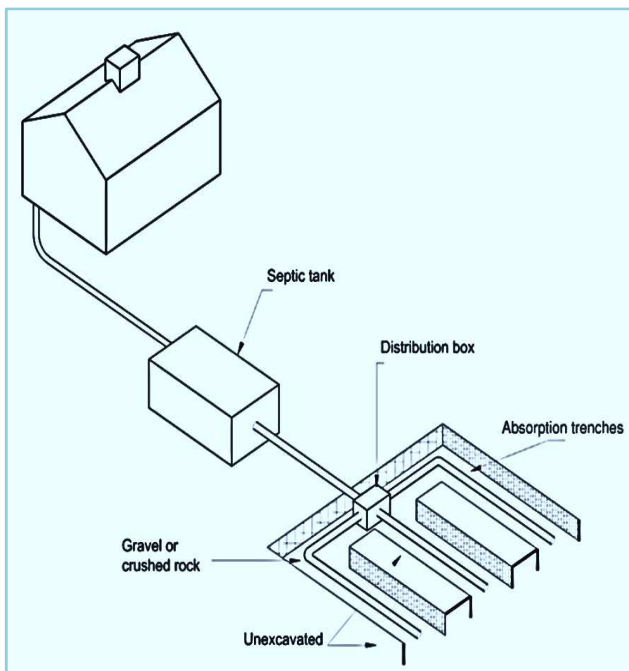
Hints for Septic Systems

A WELL MAINTAINED SYSTEM WILL COST LESS OVER THE LONG TERM.

How does the septic system work?

A basic septic system has two main parts, the septic tank and the effluent disposal area (known as absorption or septic trenches).

Household wastewater flows into the septic tank, heavy solids in the wastewater settle at the bottom of the tank forming a layer of sludge, grease and light solids float to the top forming a layer of scum.

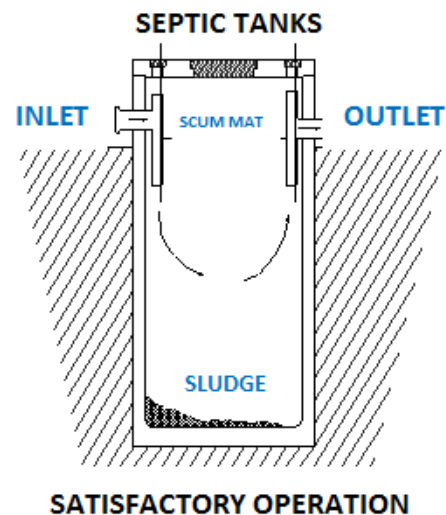


Naturally occurring bacteria known as anaerobic bacteria work to break down the sludge and scum layers. Most of the solids will in time decompose or break-up; others will not and these collect at the bottom of the tank, and this is why the tanks need to be pumped periodically.

Waste water emanating from these systems must be disposed of appropriately and in such a manner that does not interfere with nor leach onto neighbouring properties. Disposal is generally achieved by way of absorption trenches.

Absorption trenches need to be maintained and kept in good working order. The trench surface and surrounds need to be mowed regularly to allow maximum evaporation to occur.

Never allow a motor vehicle to be driven across trenches and ensure that animal access to the area is restricted. Do not allow the trenches to be covered with concrete, pavers or extra soil. Stormwater diversion mounds should be constructed to divert stormwater away from trenches.



The rate at which sludge accumulates can be minimised by:

1. ensuring that the system is not overloaded by excessive numbers of people using it;
2. not using disinfectants or chemicals, which will reduce or stop the necessary bacterial action – **use septic-friendly products.**
3. not allowing foreign objects (eg. disposable nappies, sanitary pads, etc.) to enter the septic system. These objects will block the system.

The separated wastewater in the middle layer of the tank is pushed out into the trenches as more wastewater enters the septic tank from the house.

If too much water is flushed into the septic tank in a short period of time, the wastewater flows out of the tank before it has had time to separate.

Septic System Maintenance

An absorption trench can become clogged from an overflow of sludge or scum from the septic tank.

Therefore, the build-up of sludge in the bottom of a septic tank must be removed (i.e. pumped out) on average every 5 to 10 years for small household tanks.

A simple method to determine whether your septic tank needs to be pumped out is to lift the outlet inspection opening on the lid of the septic tank and gauge the depth of sludge in the bottom of the tank using a length of 20mm dowel. If the depth of sludge exceeds 200mm the tank needs to be pumped out by a suitably licensed contractor.

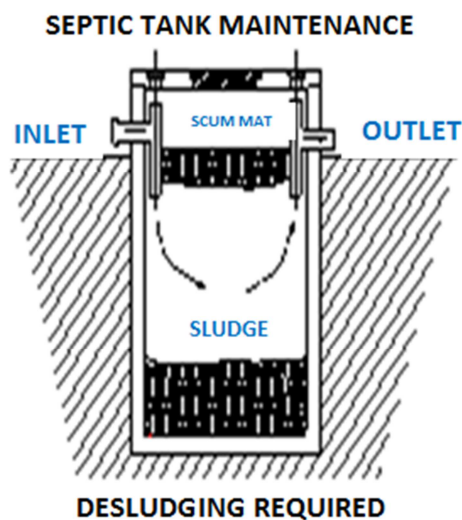
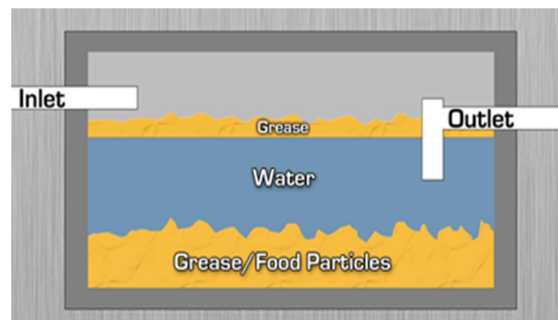
If absorption trench overload occurs, i.e. if effluent is seen to be ponding on the ground surface, endeavour to reduce the volume of effluent passing into the trenches, e.g. from laundry sullage.

Owners and occupiers of a property where a septic disposal system is installed are responsible for maintaining the system in good working order, so as to safeguard the health of persons occupying the premises.

If the system is not performing or is creating a health hazard, Council may require the system to be repaired or replaced. It is the owners/occupiers responsibility to report to Council if a septic system appears to be malfunctioning.

Grease traps

A grease trap is a concrete or plastic tank fitted into the sullage system drainage to solidify grease and fats used in cooking that are passed down the sink waste pipe. Where a grease trap is installed it should be cleaned regularly (every 2-3 weeks) so as to prevent grease and fats entering and clogging other parts of the system.



If your grease trap has not been maintained for some time, your system could be seriously affected and become blocked. If you suspect you have a grease trap but are unable to find it, contact Council's Regulatory Services Department, or a licensed plumber for assistance.

Where can I get more information?

For further information please contact Council's Regulatory Services Team on 1300 79 49 29.

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