

Maintain the septic tank

- **Discharge all sewage waste from the house into the septic tank.** Don't run wastewater from laundry or saunas directly into the drainfield as the detergent or soap scum will quickly clog soil pores and cause failure.
- **Do not add "starters" to your septic system.** Enough bacteria are available in the wastes flushed into the septic tank. Even after the tank has been pumped, enough bacteria will be provided when you use the system again.
- **Do not use additives in your system.** They are of no benefit and may harm the system. Additives that cause the accumulated sludge to increase in volume or float will result in sludge being flushed into the drainfield, plugging soil pores. Also, some additives, particularly degreasers, may be carcinogens that will flow into ground water with treated wastewater.
- **Pump the septic tank every year to remove solids and scum.** Although tanks away from lakes or rivers may not need it every year, annual pumping is excellent insurance near shorelines.
- **Remove the manhole cover when having the tank pumped** to make sure that all solids have been removed. The sludge in the tank should be mixed during pumping. A tank cannot be adequately cleaned through a 4-inch inspection pipe. Pumping through the inspection port may clog the outlet baffle with scum and grease.

Your Investment and Costs

It will cost \$75 to \$150 each time you have a septic tank pumped, but replacing the entire system and drainfield may cost from \$2,000 to \$7,000. Threats to human health and water quality increase if your septic system is not properly maintained.

If water quality in the lake deteriorates, property values are likely to decrease. In addition, if your on-site treatment system fails, you'll have the inconvenience of being unable to use household plumbing until the system is replaced.

Overall, your investment to properly maintain a septic tank and drainfield is minimal compared with the cost involved in repairing or replacing the system.