



MARICOPA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT  
WATER & WASTE MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
ONSITE WASTEWATER PROGRAM

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## Operation & Maintenance Recommendations For an Onsite Wastewater Treatment Facility

The On-Site Wastewater Treatment Facility (OSWTF) consists of two components. The septic tank removes the solids. The drain field disposes of the liquid. Occasionally there are additional treatment components for other specific purposes for which an Operation and Maintenance Agreement should have been established and followed accordingly.

The tank itself may be concrete, fiberglass, or polyethylene. The septic tank has no moving parts and therefore needs very little routine maintenance. The maintenance that is required is to clean the effluent filter regularly, at least once a year and to pump septic tank every 3 (three) to 5 (five) years. The pumping must be done by a licensed, professional pumping company to remove all contents from all compartments of the tank(s).

**DO Schedule:** Set up a regular schedule to clean the effluent filter and pump the tank.

1. To clean the filter, remove it from the outlet end of the tank and hose off all accumulated solids back into the tank. *Re-install the filter!* It is most important to utilize the filter as it is the last protection for the disposal field and is easier to clean than to construct a "new" disposal field.
2. Inspection of the sludge and scum accumulation determines when a tank needs to be pumped. When a tank is inspected, the depth of sludge and scum layers should be measured near the outlet baffle on single compartment tanks or on the inlet side of the tank near the internal baffle wall for double compartment tanks and recorded.
  - a. To determine the thickness of the scum layer, gently break the scum until a clear space can be seen. This will reveal the thickness of the scum.
  - b. To determine the depth of the sludge layer, insert a clear plastic tube in the first chamber from the top of the tank down to the bottom floor through the scum and sludge layers, cap the open (top) end of the tube and remove it to check the depth of the sludge (as if inserting a straw into a glass of water, putting your thumb over the end of the straw and removing it from the glass with the water still in the straw).
  - c. Pump the septic tank whenever:
    - i. The bottom of the scum layer is within 3 inches of the bottom of the outlet device
    - ii. The sludge layer is within eight inches of the bottom of the outlet device.
    - iii. Solids and scum represent more than 25% of the liquid volume.
    - iv. 3 to 5 years have passed since the last pumping.

**DO Maintain:** Records of maintenance performed on the system must be kept with this permit, as-built plan of the OSWTF and other pertinent design documents. These records must be passed on to subsequent homeowners when the property changes ownership.

1. The septic tank shall be pumped at the time of the sale of the residence or shall be certified by a licensed professional that the tank was inspected and pumping is not necessary, based on the fact that no accumulation of floating or settled waste was present in the septic tank or the manufacturer's written operation and maintenance instructions indicates that servicing was not required at time of the inspection. Pumping receipt records or inspection records shall be kept by the homeowner for verification.
2. For additional requirements regarding OSWTF inspections for permits issued under the Aquifer Protection Permit Rule, see **Transfer of Ownership** below.

**DO Dispose:** Only domestic and biodegradable wastes should be put into the OSWTF. Large amounts of foods, oils, greases, chemicals, pesticides, solvent, paints and drugs will damage the OSWTF. Small amounts of

**Septic Systems provide long-term effective treatment of household wastewater when properly designed, constructed and maintained. You, the Home Owner are responsible for the Operation and Maintenance of the septic system.**

detergents, bleaches, drain cleaner, toilet bowl deodorizers and other household chemicals will not adversely effect the bacterial action in the OSWTF.

**DO NOT overload the OSWTF system.** Repair all leaking faucets and toilets and do not put an excessive amount of liquid through the OSWTF. Distribute the usage throughout the week. For example, do 1-2 loads of laundry a day, instead of 12 loads one day. Excessive water will overload the system by not allowing sufficient time for solids to settle and would cause them to escape the septic tank, (which will) therefore clog the field.

**DO NOT use a garbage grinder excessively.** Use the trash can. The tank and filter will require more frequent cleaning. Other options are compost, incinerate, or put all organic material into the garbage.

**DO NOT dispose of the following items down sinks or toilets.** Coffee grounds, cooking fats, lard, wet strength towels, bones, disposable diapers, facial tissues, cigarette butts, sanitary napkins, tampon applicators, prophylactics or any other materials that do not break down quickly and naturally.

**DO NOT use a “starter”.** The naturally occurring enzymes and bacteria present in domestic sewage waste will begin to digest the solids naturally.

**DO NOT use corrosive chemicals.** Peroxide, sulfuric acid and other trade-named products will dissolve the material in the tank and allow it to flow into the disposal field. These materials are detrimental to the system because they destroy the bacterial action necessary for the removal of pathogens and organic solids.

**DO NOT construct anything that will cover or impair the disposal field.** This includes, but is not limited to buildings, garages, swimming pools, patios, deep rooting trees or vegetation. Construction over the disposal field will impede the performance of the OSWTF and result in costly repairs. Divert all rain water, roof runoff, or flood irrigation away from tank and disposal area to prevent ponding of runoff on top of the disposal field.

**DO NOT drive over the disposal field.** Driving over the disposal field will impede the performance and damage the components of the OSWTF. Driving over the septic tank is dangerous unless the tank has a reinforced lid and the risers (if applicable) are strong enough to withstand the vehicle weight.

**DO NOT flood irrigate over the septic system or disposal field.** The best way to irrigate these areas is with sprinklers.

**DO NOT drain your swimming pool into the septic system or over the disposal field.** Large volumes of water can “drown” your drain field and chlorine can destroy important bacteria in your septic tank and drain field.

## **Transfer of Ownership:**

*Which OSWTF's do these inspections and filing requirements apply to?*

This requirement applies at the time of ownership change, such as a property sale, to any property with an On-Site Wastewater Treatment Facility approved by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) or Maricopa County. [Arizona Administrative Code (A.A.C.) R18-9-A301(D)(2)(c); R18-9-A304; R18-9-A316]. All related documents and fees must be filed with Maricopa County Environmental Services Department, 501 North 44th Street, Suite 200, Phoenix, AZ 85008, within 15 days after the date of ownership change. For complete details on the regulations, who is licensed to perform these inspections and what inspection form to use go to: <https://www.maricopa.gov/2491/Ownership-Transfer> or call Maricopa County Environmental Services Department at (602) 506-6666.