

Marshall Community Wastewater System

Septic System DOs and DON'Ts

Each of the residences in the Marshall Community Wastewater System Service Area has their own on-site septic tank or, in a few cases, a shared/cluster septic tank. Unlike a conventional public sewer system where all sewage wastes are treated at a municipal treatment plant, the individual septic tanks make up an important part of the waste treatment process. The waste products from the individual septic systems can have a significant effect on the performance of the community wastewater treatment and leachfield system, and to a lesser degree. Also, while the community wastewater system is safely sized to treat and dispose of the normal sewage flow from the service area, the capacity is not unlimited. Excess water use by the residents can damage the system.

Be aware of what goes into the system. For the system to work best, you must protect the ecology of microorganisms living in the septic tank. These microbes break down solids into gas and water, and are an important part of the community treatment process. The following is a list of a few simple DOs and DON'Ts for residences served by septic systems that should help protect the community wastewater system from unnecessary damage.

DOs

1. Do practice water conservation. By limiting the amount of water use, the life of the wastewater system will be preserved and extended. For example, avoid as much as possible, doing multiple loads of laundry on the same day. Avoid letting the water run unnecessarily while washing hands, cleaning food, brushing teeth, etc.
2. Do clean the lint filter on the washing machine, preferably before every load.
3. Do fix all leaking plumbing fixtures. A leaking faucet or toilet can add hundreds of gallons of additional water to the wastewater system every day.
4. Do install/maintain low-flush toilets in all bathrooms.
5. Do contact the District's maintenance personnel if you experience any problem with your plumbing or observe or suspect problems with sewer lines, septic tanks, pumps or other wastewater facilities.

DON'Ts

1. Don't attempt to undertake any repairs to the septic system without contacting a qualified septic system maintenance or plumbing contractor for assistance or advice and the Marin County Environmental Health Services.
2. Don't dig indiscriminately in landscaping areas where sewer lines may be located.
3. Don't use any special septic tank additives that claim they will enhance the performance of septic systems. Additives do not improve the performance of the septic tank or leachfield and could lead to damage. The natural organisms that grow in the septic tank are sufficient to process the wastewater. These organisms generate their own enzymes for breaking down and digesting the organic matter and nutrients contained in sewage.
4. Don't drain surface water into the septic system. This means no leaders from roofs or surface drains for rainwater shall be connected to any portion of the wastewater sewer. No surface or subsurface drainage, rainwater, seepage, cooling water or unpolluted industrial process waters shall be permitted to enter any sanitary sewer by any device or method whatsoever.
5. Don't use excessive amounts of water.

6. Don't, in general, drain large volumes of hot water at one time. Avoid long hot showers or back-to-back hot water laundry loads. Do not pour any liquid or vapor having a temperature higher than 150 degrees F down the drain.
7. Don't allow backwash from water softeners to enter the system. The backwash brine contains high levels of chlorides that can destroy microorganisms in the septic tank.
8. Don't drain waters or wastes having a pH lower than 5.5 or higher than 9.0 or having any other corrosive property capable of causing damage or hazard to structures, equipment, and personnel of the community system. Minimize the use of household cleaners, strong chemicals, and bleach. Avoid the use of antibacterial soaps.
9. Don't dump RV waste into the septic system.
10. Don't flush medications. Manage long-term use of antibiotics that could kill the microorganisms in the tank. Check the Marin County Environmental Health Services website for free places to drop off household medicines: <http://www.marincounty.org/depts/cd/divisions/environmental-health-services/medical-waste>
11. Don't use concentrated chlorine products in your toilet. The chlorine damages the rubber seals and gaskets in your toilet, which could lead to leaks and excessive water flow into the septic system.
12. Don't install a garbage disposal unit in the kitchen. The conditions of approval for the project officially discouraged the inclusion of garbage grinders in the house designs. Use of kitchen garbage disposals simply adds waste products to the septic system, making the microorganisms work harder to process the wastes, and increasing the frequency of septic tank pump-outs.
13. Don't dispose of ashes, cinder, sand, mud, straw, shavings, metal, glass, rags, feathers, tar, plastics, wood, paunch manures, or any other solid or viscous substance into the system that are capable of causing obstruction to the flow in sewers or other interference with the proper operation of the septic tank and community wastewater system.
14. Don't dispose of any materials that could destroy the natural digestion process of the microorganisms in the septic tank or leach field that could lead to clogging of the system. For example, Don't put the any of following chemicals or materials down the drain or flush down the toilet:

coffee grinds

dental floss

disposable diapers

cat litter

sanitary napkins

tampons

cigarette butts

condoms

fat, grease or lard

paper towels

facial tissues

floor wax

rug cleaners

egg shells

newspapers

hair

lotions

Hazardous Chemicals:

paint

varnish

oils

pesticides

antifreeze

photographic solutions

pool and spa solutions

degreasers

gasoline, benzene, or naphthalastics

flammable or explosive liquid, solid or gas

Waste from chemical toilets, port-a-potties, or holding tanks (e.g. from boats or RVs)

any other hazardous chemicals