

Homeowner's Trouble Shooting Guide for Alternative Septic Systems

Problem	Possible Causes	Possible Solutions <i>(Highlighted sections should be handled by a septic professional.)</i>
<i>Infrequent</i> short duration alarms	Excessive water usage from too many consecutive loads of laundry, large parties, leaving water fixture running, etc.	Spread laundry loads out over the day or several days. Occasional parties will not harm the system. The alarm simply alerts user that system is getting more water than it is designed to handle on a regular basis.
<i>Frequent</i> short duration alarms (every day or almost every day)	Water usage beyond system design capacity. Programmable timer not set properly to handle acceptable daily flow. Top two floats set too close to one another. Screened Vault filter clogged.	Reduce water usage. Check for leaking plumbing, e.g. faucets and toilets. Check for possible infiltration into tanks. Reset programmable timer to acceptable range. Re-position floats to correct settings. Clean Screened Vault.
Short duration alarms only during storms or wet periods.	Septic tank or pump tank not watertight and is taking in groundwater	Find and fix leaks.
Continuous high water alarm.	Pump failure or septic or pump tank overfull after prolonged power outage.	Stop using water. Call a pumper to pump tank as needed. Check pump(s) and repair or replace if not working properly. Consider use of a generator.
Continuous low water alarm.	Pump tank is empty and pump is still running; Possible faulty wiring.	Turn pump off until problem is solved. Pump will burn out if left to continually operate with no liquid in the tank. Check operation of pump and on/off float settings. Check for hole in tank or damage to tank. Reroute drip system flush to pump tank or adjust floats.
Uneven surging of pump on/off	Infiltration of water into tank. Floats impeded by debris. Electrical Cords loose.	Seal off leaks into tank. Check for proper seal of risers and outlet of tank. Remove debris and check float settings. Keep excess electrical cords bound and wrapped.
Strong odor and cloudy effluent in pump basin/tank. Algal growth.	Improper treatment of sewage. Possible anaerobic conditions. Sand filter clogged or sand filter bed covered with impervious material. Excessive bleach, antibiotics, chemotherapy in system killed microorganisms that break down solids	Check for buildup of biomat. Clean laterals and manifold. Place air manifold kit into operation. Check with septic professional. Collect effluent samples for trouble shooting.
Uneven ponding of effluent in leachline observation ports	Partially plugged lateral lines causing overloading in specific areas. Laterals are not properly balanced.	Perform flushing and cleaning of laterals and manifold. Check for breaks in lateral lines or manifold. Check head pressure of each line to ensure even distribution. Adjust squirt heights. Consult Designer regarding need for check valves.
Surfacing effluent on disposal field.	Damage to field by vehicles, landscaping, or livestock. Rodent holes from gophers, moles or voles. Break in manifold or lateral lines. Build-up of biomat, clogging of sand. Excessive waste generation from overuse.	Switch diversion valve to other field and contact EHS, septic consultant, & contractor for help. Prevent rodent harborage. Repair piping. Flush laterals and manifold. Check distribution lines and even head pressure per Design. Check monitoring wells for proper absorption of effluent before and after a dosing cycle. Effluent should drain well and not exhibit ponding. Consult Septic Professional. Adjust dosing timer and spread out laundry loads and use over several days.

