

NORTH CASTLE CONSERVATION BOARD---

HIGHLIGHTS ON SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Many, if not most, residents in North Castle use a septic system. There are two parts: a tank and fields. The tank, which receives wastewater from the kitchen, bathroom, and laundry also holds it so that particles can settle into layers. Heavy particles settle to the bottom, where they form a layer of sludge. Lighter materials form scum above the excess water, which is released into leach fields to infiltrate and evaporate. A healthy system has bacteria, which liquefy the solid waste.

Septic system failure is dangerous. Bacteria and viruses in the system can cause illness. Under normal conditions the soil and soil bacteria remove pathogens. However, soil cannot remove heavy metals or toxic chemicals. Overuse of disinfectants, bleach, and detergents (especially with scent) can destroy helpful bacteria and disable the proper functioning of a septic system.

Signs of septic failure:

- Slow drainage
- Backup in toilets or drains
- Excessive growth over the leaching fields of weeds or a lush growth of grass
- Strong and unpleasant odor in the fields

What you can do to protect your septic system:

- Every 2 to 3 years have the tank pumped by a septic tank service
- Disposal units in sinks add 50% more waste to the tank; coffee grounds, diapers, grease or oils from cooking or salads can clog the system – these should not be put into the system
- Use the Hazardous Waste Collection Day set up by Westchester County to dispose of chemicals safely; do not pour them down a drain. Call the Hotline at 000-0000 for information.
- Avoid additives, sometimes recommended by waste management firms. These are not proven to be helpful and may harm your system
- Install plumbing fixtures that conserve water and practice a conservative use of water (shorter showers, full loads for laundry and dishwasher, etc.)

What else you can do to help your septic system:

- Keep a drawing of your septic system, showing the location of the tank access cover and field lines. You may wish to keep a record of cleanings and any repair work.
- Minimize your use of herbicides and pesticides to protect your soil and groundwater.
- Consider installing water-saving devices. Call the County Hotline at 000-000

Remember... the routine maintenance of your septic system protects ground water, the source of your home water supply.