System Dos

To extend the life of your on-site sewage system, save on maintenance costs and protect water quality:

1. Inspect your septic tank annually.

Generally, septic tanks should be pumped every three to five years. Inspection, by you or a professional, may show that you need to pump more or less often. Regular pumping ensures that solids will not flow from the septic tank into the drainfield. Solids can destroy the drainfield, and pumping will not bring a failed drainfield back to life.

2. Use less water.

Reduce the amount of waste water entering your on-site sewage system to increase its life span. Excessive water use is a main cause of system failure.

To reduce household water use:

- Use water-saving bathroom, laundry and kitchen fixtures (faucets, shower heads, toilets, front loading washing machines).
- Run and drain appliances, such as dishwashers and washing machines, one at a time.
- Spread laundry over the entire week; avoid partial loads, and no more than 2 – 3 loads per day.
- Fix all faucet and toilet leaks promptly. Even a slow leak can overload the drainfield.

3. Direct water from downspouts and roofs away from the drainfield.

Additional water from these sources may prevent your drainfield from working properly.

4. Keep cars and trucks off the septic tank and drainfield areas.

This prevents pipes from breaking and soil from becoming compacted. Compacted soils can't absorb water from the drainfield.

5. Install risers for easier access.

Risers from the tank lids to the soil surface make maintenance easier.

Maintenance Records

Use the chart below to keep a record of your on-site sewage system maintenance and remind you of your next inspection. **If you move, leave this record with the new homeowner.**

Note: If your on-site sewage system contains a pump, the pump should be regularly inspected and maintained.

Date	Work Done, Firm, Cost, Notes

System Don'ts

To keep your on-site sewage system in proper working order, keep these things in mind:

1. Avoid garbage disposal use.

A garbage disposal adds solids and grease to your system, which could lead to drainfield failure.

2. Don't use septic tank additives or "miracle" system cleaners.

Some of these chemicals can actually harm your on-site sewage system by allowing solids to flow into and clog the drainfield. The chemicals can also contaminate ground and surface water.

3. Don't dispose of water from hot tubs into the on-site sewage system.

Large volumes of water are harmful to the system, and the chlorine can destroy important bacteria in the system. Drain hot tubs onto the ground, away from the drainfield and not into a storm drain.

4. Don't flush solid wastes into the on-site sewage system.

These include diapers, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, tampons, condoms and grease.

5. Don't put strong chemicals, such as hazardous cleaning products, down the drain.

Household chemicals—such as drain cleaners, paint thinners and floor cleaners—can destroy important bacteria in you septic tank and contaminate ground and surface water.

6. Don't construct patios, carports or use landscaping plastic over the drainfield.

Grass is the best cover for your septic tank and drainfield. Soil compaction and paving prevents oxygen from getting into the soil. This oxygen is needed by bacteria to break down and treat sewage.