

Septic Tank Pumping Guide

Keep these tips in mind when you get your septic tank pumped.

It is important to know when to pump your tank. Septic tanks collect and process wastewater solids, while the liquid (effluent) flows out into the drainfield. Over time, the solids build up and need to be pumped out. If the solids are not pumped out, they can be pushed out of the tank and clog the drainfield, causing it to malfunction.

Replacing a septic system can cost between \$7,000 and \$25,000 and requires a permit from Thurston County.

A septic tank **INSPECTION** typically costs between \$100 and \$250. Getting your tank **PUMPED** usually costs between \$300 and \$400 (may be more if charge is per gallon). Your tank will need to be uncovered (dug up) for either. You can do this yourself, or pay the pumper to do it. The cost for uncovering the tank varies depending on depth, but can be between \$150 and \$300.

Pumping a pump chamber for a pressure system usually costs between \$75 and \$250, depending on its size.

Consider having access **RISERS** installed on the septic tank. Risers replace the concrete lids and make the tank accessible without digging. Material costs for a 24-inch diameter riser range from \$150 - \$260 depending on tank depth. Two risers are needed for a 2-compartment tank. For

brochure go to our website at www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehoss/pdf/RiserInstall.pdf

Since prices vary for septic tank pumping services, get estimates from several firms. Remember that price is not always the best indicator of service quality. Speak with friends and neighbors for recommendations.

When you get your tank pumped, ask the pumper to recommend when your tank should be pumped next. Ask if you could have waited longer or waited too long. Write down this information!

Once you have learned your pumping schedule, be aware that as households grow and change, so does water usage. Greater water usage may require a more frequent pumping schedule.

Despite advertisers' claims, septic additives never eliminate the need to pump out the tank!

Pumping Pointers

1. Both compartments of a two-chamber tank must be pumped out. Tanks installed after the mid-1970s probably have two chambers.
2. The contents should be pumped out through the main lids, not the baffle (the pipe that goes down into the liquid).
3. The tank should be thoroughly emptied from both compartments, and rinsed

out; there is no need to leave "starter" material behind.

4. On the outlet of newer systems, there may be an effluent filter to protect the drainfield. During pumping, the filter should be removed and rinsed into the tank. The filter should be cleaned at least once a year.
5. If you have a pressurized system, have the pump and pump chamber inspected and pumped. If there are any solids found in the pump chamber (floating or settled), you should have it pumped out by the pumper. Pumpers should not change the arrangement of float switches or control panel settings.
6. While pumping or inspecting your septic system, pumpers may identify other problems. Pumpers can do minor repairs, such as repairing or replacing a broken baffle. We recommend you **get a second opinion for any repair estimated to cost more than \$200.** Keep in mind that it takes several days to refill the tank, so you have time to get estimates.
7. The pumper is required to file a pump report online at www.onlinerme.com and provide a copy to you.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, or need more information, call the Thurston County Septic Help Line at (360) 867-2669; TDD Line 711 or 800-833-6388 or go to the website at: www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehoss

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