

ENVIRONMENT



## SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE A REALITY CHECK



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## PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT

If you are like many homeowners, you may not think about what goes down your drains—but if you have a septic system, what you don't know can cost you. If you don't take care of your system, it can fail, resulting in a costly replacement and possibly causing irreparable damage to your property. Not performing maintenance on your septic system is like buying a new car and having the hood welded shut.

We want to help you prevent problems. This brochure is designed to get you started. If you need more information, call us or visit our website to send us a question by email.

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STANDARD & ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS?

There are two main types of systems. Standard “gravity” systems are composed of a septic tank that drains untreated wastewater into a drainfield by gravity alone. Alternative systems include pressure distribution systems, mounds, and systems with pre-treatment, such as sand filters and aerobic treatment units. They are often controlled by complicated electronics.

Properties served by alternative septic systems have a Notice to Title recorded to inform future property owners that the home has an alternative system that requires additional maintenance.

Alternative systems have become more common as our population has grown and homes have been built where standard systems won't work due to small lot size,

steep slopes, or poor soil quality. These factors require alternative systems that purify wastewater to a minimum standard before releasing it into the soil. Because they are more complex, they cost more and require more maintenance than standard systems.

## **WHY SHOULD I MONITOR & MAINTAIN MY SEPTIC SYSTEM?**

State and local regulations require that all septic systems—regardless of age or type—be regularly monitored and maintained to protect the health of your family, your neighborhood, and the environment. When a septic system fails, sewage can make people sick by contaminating nearby wells, groundwater, streams, marine water and shellfish. You can find these regulations on our website.

If your system fails due to lack of maintenance, it can be expensive to repair and replace it. Current regulations may require you to replace your standard system with a more complex and costly alternative one. The average cost a replacement system is approximately \$23,000.

A failed septic system can reduce your property value and make it hard to sell.

## **WHO CAN PERFORM MONITORING & MAINTENANCE?**

In Kitsap County, monitoring and maintenance must be performed by a person who has been certified by us. You may hire a certified contractor or, if you occupy your own single-family home, you can get certification from us and maintain your own system.

Call us if you are interested in homeowner certification. To get a list of certified maintenance specialists in our area, either call us or visit our website.

## HOW MUCH DOES MONITORING & MAINTENANCE COST?

The fees contractors charge are not regulated. They can vary, depending on the type of system you own and how frequently it requires maintenance.

Septic system monitoring programs are mandated by Washington State, and carried out by local public health jurisdictions, who fund their programs primarily through fees. In Kitsap County, we fund our monitoring program by receiving a portion of each contractor's fee.