



For immediate release

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Homeowners Maintaining Septic Tanks in Cobb

Septic systems are usually installed in areas where sanitary sewer is not available and where wastewater must be disposed of on the property. Every drop of water that goes down sink drains or toilets carries with it contaminants, chemicals and bacteria or viruses that the homeowner wants to remove. The water from washing machines, baths, toilets and other uses must go either to a septic tank or sanitary sewer system.

A poorly functioning septic system is a potentially serious cause of water pollution. Stormwater can carry harmful bacteria from failing septic systems into rivers, lakes, streams and groundwater. Like an automobile, a septic system needs periodic maintenance to extend the life of the system and to avoid costly emergency repairs.

A septic tank should be pumped at least every five years. The average cleaning cost is \$350. Emergency repairs may run \$3,500 or more depending on tank capacity. The estimated cost to replace a septic system begins at \$5,000 and can run much higher under special conditions such as proximity to an aquifer, underlying rock or soil composition.

How do you know if your septic tank is failing? Even the best-designed and maintained system will eventually fail. They cannot be made to last forever, but soil type, water conservation and quality maintenance will determine the life expectancy of any septic tank system. The most obvious evidence is wet areas on your property having a sewage odor that are located above the absorption field. This will occur for many reasons and indicates a system needs replacement. Other premature indicators are water backing up in the house or slow flushing toilets. If you have concerns that your system is having problems, contact a licensed septic tank contractor.

Five simple ways to care for septic tanks

1. Flush only human waste and toilet paper into septic tanks.
2. Don't use your toilets as a trash can by dumping non-biodegradable items (such as diapers, sanitary napkins, kitty litter, fats, baby wipes, tampons, cigarette butts, grease and coffee grinds down toilets).
3. Avoid flooding your septic tank by fixing leaks and conserving water in your home. Leaking toilets are a major cause of septic system failure. You can test your toilet for leaks. One simple way to test toilets for leaks is to drop food coloring in the tank. If you see food coloring in the bowl, then you have a leak.

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4. Have your septic system inspected and pumped at least once every three to five years.
5. Contact your local sewer authority to see if your home can be connected to the sanitary sewer system.

A Septic Tank Maintenance and Care workshop will be on **November 10 at 6:30 p.m.** at the Cobb County Water Quality Training Laboratory, 662 South Cobb Drive, Marietta, GA 30060-3105. *Registration is required.* Register at 404-463-3259 or online at www.cleanwatercampaign.com. The speaker is Tom Campbell of Cobb County Environmental Health Services.

Facts:

- There are over 500,000 septic tanks in metro Atlanta (Source: Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District).
- There are an estimated 25,000 septic tanks in Cobb
- An estimated 350-400 tanks per year are installed in the county

The Clean Water Campaign works to educate the public about activities that help prevent water pollution. It is a cooperative, multi-agency public education initiative spearheaded by 20 local governments in metro Atlanta and managed by the Atlanta Regional Commission. For more information about the Clean Water Campaign, contact Kelley O'Brien at 404-463-3259.

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