

SEPTIC TANKS AFTER FLOODING



WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

During a flood event, septic tanks and the surrounding drainage area may become inundated by flood waters. In these circumstances, your septic tank will be unable to receive wastewater from your home as there is a risk that sewage will back up into your home. Other methods of disposing of human waste must be used until the septic system is checked and cleared for use.

Refer to the Information Sheet “Disposing of Sewage in an Emergency” for other methods of disposal.

WHAT SHALL I DO?

- **DO NOT** use your septic tank system until the floodwaters over the drainage field have gone.
- **DO NOT** pump out your septic tank during flood conditions or saturated soil conditions as it may cause the tank to rise out of the ground, damaging the pipework.
- **DO NOT** attempt to clean out the septic tank yourself. Tanks may contain dangerous gases. Use the Yellow Pages to locate septic tank contractors.
- **DO** check gully traps for debris and silt and remove material so that it is not flushed into the tank.
- **DO** have your septic tank and drainage field professionally inspected, serviced and/or cleaned if you suspect the system has become damaged or clogged with silt or debris. Signs of damage include settling or an inability to accept water. If the drainage system has become clogged with silt, a new system may have to be installed.
- **DO NOT** drive or operate heavy machinery over the drainage field as saturated soil is easily compacted. This will reduce the ability of the soil to absorb wastewater.
- **DO** check outlet filters on the septic tank for clogging and clean or replace if necessary. Flooding of the tank will lift scum and fats that may block the outlet or outlet filter.
- **REDUCE** water usage in your home until the septic tank system restores itself and the water table falls. This can include:
 - Flushing toilets only when necessary
 - Take short showers instead of baths
 - Wash dishes by hand instead of using the dishwasher
 - Limit clothes washing or wash clothes off-site
- **DO NOT** drink water from bores/wells close to flooded septic tank systems until the water has been tested by an approved laboratory and found to be free from contamination.

**KEEP LISTENING TO YOUR RADIO FOR INSTRUCTIONS,
INFORMATION AND ADVICE**

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