

# HOMEOWNER'S MANUAL

Onsite Wastewater Collection & Treatment Systems

## How to Take Care of Your Wastewater System



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## Do's and Don'ts for INSIDE the House

There are a number of do's and don'ts that will help ensure a long life and minimal maintenance for your system. As a general rule, nothing should be disposed into any wastewater system that hasn't first been ingested, other than toilet tissue, mild detergents, and wash water. Here are some additional guidelines.



**Don't** flush dangerous and damaging substances into your wastewater treatment system. (Please refer to the "Substitutes for Household Hazardous Waste," on the next panel.) Specifically, do not flush . . .

- Pharmaceuticals
- Excessive amounts of bath or body oils
- Water softener backwash
- Flammable or toxic products
- Household cleaners, especially floor wax and rug cleaners
- Chlorine bleach, chlorides, and pool or spa products
- Pesticides, herbicides, agricultural chemicals, or fertilizers

**Don't** plumb water softener discharge brine into your wastewater system. (The softened WATER is OK, just not the BRINE that's produced during the regeneration cycle.)

**Do** route the brine around your wastewater system so it discharges directly into the soil. This is a cost-effective solution that ensures the long-term performance of your system and the biological processes that occur inside it.

Water softener brine can interfere with nitrogen removal. And it degrades treatment by interfering with the settling process inside the tank. Without proper settling, solids, grease, and oils are carried through your system, clogging components. This increases your costs by...

- requiring the tank to be pumped more often (at hundreds of dollars per pumpout)
- requiring filters to be cleaned more often
- fouling drainfields and other downstream equipment



**Do** collect grease in a container and dispose with your trash. And avoid using garbage disposals excessively. Compost scraps or dispose with your trash, also. Food by-products accelerate the need for septage pumping and increase maintenance.



**Do** keep lint out of your wastewater treatment system by cleaning the lint filters on your washing machine and dryer before every load. Installing a supplemental lint filter on your washing machine would be a good precautionary measure. (This normally takes just a few minutes. Lint and other such materials can make a big difference in the frequency and cost of pumping out your primary treatment tank.)



**Do** use your trash can to dispose of substances that cause maintenance problems and/or increase the need for septage pumping

**Don't ever** flush the following down the drain:

- Egg shells, cantaloupe seeds, gum, coffee grounds
- Tea bags, chewing tobacco, cigarette butts
- Condoms, dental floss, sanitary napkins, diapers
- Paper towels, newspapers, candy wrappers
- Rags, large amounts of hair
- Baby wipes, medicated wipes, cleaning wipes, and wipes made out of non-biodegradable material



**Don't** use special additives that are touted to enhance the performance of your tank or system. Additives can cause major damage to other areas in the collection system. The natural microorganisms that grow in your system generate their own enzymes that are sufficient for breaking down and digesting nutrients in the wastewater.

## Do's and Don'ts for OUTSIDE the House



**Don't** enter your tank, ever! Gases that can be generated in the tank and/or oxygen depletion can be fatal.

**Do** keep the tank access lid secure to the riser at all times with stainless steel lid bolts. If bolts are lost or damaged, call your service provider immediately for replacements. Or call Orenco at (800) 348-9843 or +1 (541) 459-4449. If the tank lid becomes detached from the riser or if the lid or riser becomes damaged, **BLOCK ACCESS TO THE TANK OPENING IMMEDIATELY AND KEEP CHILDREN AWAY** until all repairs are made.



**Don't** dig without knowing the location of your wastewater system. As much as possible, plan landscaping and permanent outdoor structures before installation. But easily removable items, such as bird baths and picnic tables, are OK to place on top of your system.



**Don't** drive over your tank or any buried components in your system, unless they've been equipped with a special traffic lid. If the system is subject to possible traffic, put up a barricade or a row of shrubs.



**Don't** dump RV waste into your wastewater system. It will increase the frequency of required septage pumping. When dumped directly into the pumping vault, RV waste clogs or fouls equipment, causing undue maintenance and repair costs. (Also, some RV waste may contain chemicals that are toxic or that may retard the biological digestion occurring within the tank.)

**Don't** ever connect rain gutters or storm drains to the sewer or allow surface water to drain into it. And don't discharge hot-tub water into your system. The additional water will increase costs and reduce the capacity of the collection and treatment systems. It can also wash excess solids through the tank, and, for properties with drainfields, additional water can flood the drainfield.

## At the Control Panel



**Do** locate your electrical control panel where it will be protected from potential vandalism and have unobstructed access.

**Do** familiarize yourself with the location of your wastewater system and electrical control panel. Refer to the panel's model number when reporting a malfunction in the system.

### IMPORTANT! CAUTION!

Only a qualified electrician or authorized installer/operator should work on your control panel. Before anyone does any work on either the wiring to the level control floats and pumps in the vault or on the control panel itself, it is imperative to first switch the isolation fuse/breaker and the circuit breakers in the panel to the "Off" positions, then switch "Off" the power to the system at the main breaker!

**Do** make arrangements with a reliable service person to provide regular monitoring and maintenance, and place the service person's phone number on or in your control panel!

**Do** remember that the audible alarm can be silenced by pushing the lighted button located directly above the "Push to Silence" label on the front of the electrical control panel. Hold the button until the alarm goes off. With normal use, the tank has a reserve storage capacity good for about 24 hours.

**Don't** turn off the main circuit breaker to the wastewater pumps when going on vacation. If there is any infiltration or inflow into the system, the pumps will need to handle it.