

COMMONLY USED TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Septic systems process waste in areas where sewers cannot reach. Many rural homes have these units attached to drain pipes from bathrooms, kitchens and laundry rooms. A large concrete tank and liner go into the leach field to process raw sewage.

Town and state laws regulate the size and location of where a house is built. These residential units need cleaning and pumping out every one to ten years depending on the number of people in the home and the gallon capacity. It's important for homeowners to understand the terms maintenance and repair companies use.

Baffle – Before drain water reaches the storage container, there's a smaller box with a flap that keeps solid waste in that container. The baffle is usually before the drain pipe enters the concrete or plastic box and again where the leach field pipe begins. This baffle should be inspected by a professional when the septic system is pumped and inspected every few years.

Drain Field- A shallow, covered excavation made in unsaturated soil containing rock or gravel into which effluent is discharged through distribution piping. The soil under and around the drain field accepts, treats and disperses effluent as it percolates through the soil, ultimately discharging to groundwater.

Disposal System- Any system used to disperse effluent to the underlying soil.

Leach Line or Leach Bed- A Soil absorption configuration consisting of a network of trenches with perforated pipes, surrounded by rock or gravel, and covered by backfill. A leach bed is similar to leach lines, except that the distribution lines are housed in a single excavation.

Distribution Box- A small, subsurface structure which receives septic tank effluent and distributes it to all segments of the soil absorption system.

Effluent- Sewage water, or other liquid, partially or completely treated, or in its natural state, flowing out of a septic tank or system component.

Effluent Filter- A removable, cleanable devise inserted into the outlet piping of the septic tank designed to trap excessive solids that would otherwise be transported to the drain field.

Seepage Pit- A type of leach field: A covered excavation that is dug deep into the ground from -15 feet to 60 feet deep- with perforated pipe and rock. This type of leach field uses much less space than a leach bed or leach lines.

Septic Tank- A buried, watertight tank, usually constructed of concrete, designed to receive and provide primary treatment of raw wastewater. It has no moving parts; There is an inlet baffle, an outlet baffle, or tee, on the pipes inside the tank. These work to keep the scum and sludge inside the tank.

Scum- Floatable solids such as grease, paper and feces that combine on the top of the liquid in a septic tank. This is what you see when you look into the tank.

Sludge- The heavy, slimy deposit found at the bottom of a septic tank.

Solids- Everything that is not effluent, or liquid. "Sludge", settling solids, and "scum", floating solids, are often referred to as "solids".