



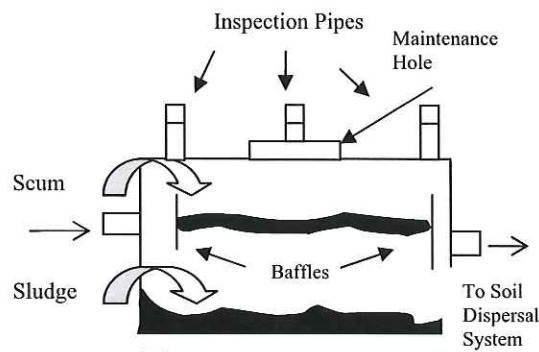
# Septic Tank Maintenance

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**T**he purpose of this fact sheet is to discuss Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS) tank maintenance requirements.

## Why is proper septic tank maintenance necessary?

Periodic removal of solids in septic tanks will ensure long-term and cost-effective service of the SSTS. Without proper maintenance the sludge layer at the bottom of the tank, and the floating scum layer, will accumulate and begin to flow from the tank into the soil dispersal system, commonly called the drainfield, leading to premature failure. Repair of a failed drainfield can be costly. Also, lack of proper maintenance can result in a sewage backup into the home.



## When is proper maintenance required?

Minn. R. 7080.2450 requires a SSTS maintenance assessment at least once every three years. A local government's SSTS ordinance may contain stricter or additional

requirements, therefore, it is important to know and follow the local requirements.

## Who is responsible for proper maintenance?

It is the system owner or the owner's agent's responsibility to assure maintenance is accomplished.

## What is proper maintenance?

Minn. R. 7080.2450 requires the owner or owner's agent to regularly, but in no case less frequently than every three years.

- assess whether the sewage tank leaks below the designed operating depth
- assess whether sewage tank tops, riser joints, and riser connections leak
- measure accumulations of scum and sludge depths
- remove all tank contents when necessary

Also, local governments are required to have a management plan for all new or replacement SSTS within their jurisdiction. This management plan must include a maintenance component.

## When must the solids and liquids be removed from the tank?

All solids and liquids must be removed when the top of sludge layer is less than 12 inches below the bottom of the outlet baffle, or the bottom of the scum layer is less than three inches above the bottom of the outlet baffle.

## **Who can perform the maintenance?**

When scum or sludge depths exceed the requirements above, a state-licensed professional maintainer needs to remove the tank contents through the maintenance hole, not the inspection pipes.

Maintenance through the inspection pipes does not remove all solids from the tank and can cause damage to the tank baffles, which are necessary to prevent sludge and scum from entering the drainfield and causing premature failure. Ensure your maintenance provider removes all tank contents through the maintenance hole.

## **Can I use septic tank additives?**

Minn. R. 7080.2450 prohibits the use of any product intended to lessen the amount of accumulated solids in a septic tank in order to reduce the frequency of proper maintenance. The use of additives does not fulfill the solids removal requirement of the rule. Additionally, additives containing hazardous materials must not be used in an SSTS.

## **Need more information?**

For additional SSTS information, please visit our Web site at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/ists/> or call us at 651-296-6300, toll free 800-657-3864.