

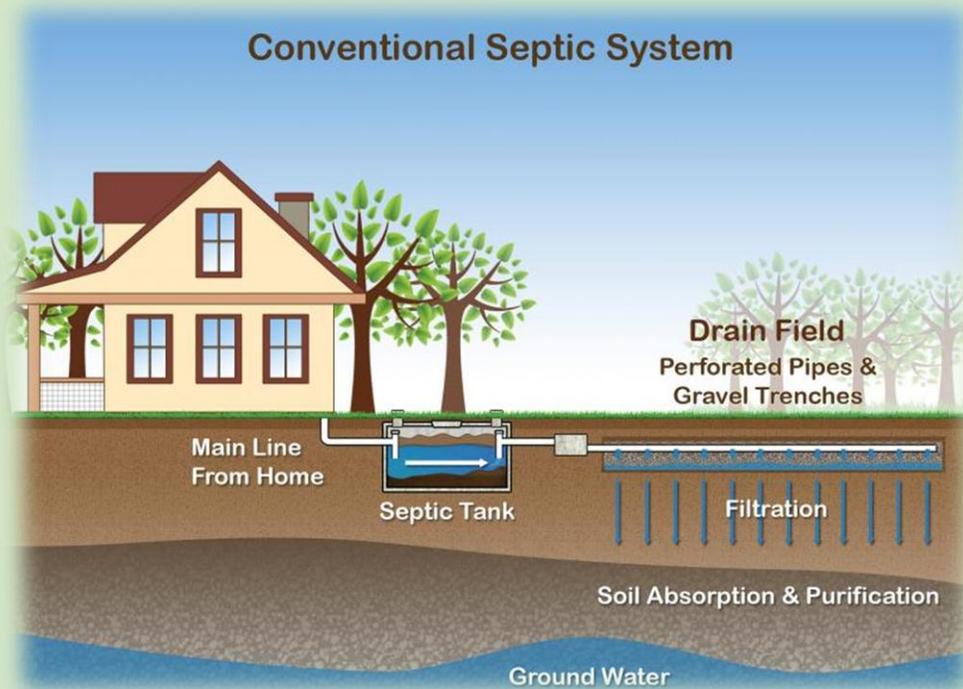
# SEPTIC SYSTEM BASICS

## Maintain your system

Many septic system owners assume as long as their used water “goes away,” their system must be working properly. Septic systems must be designed specifically for your site’s conditions and installed correctly. Only regular maintenance and evaluation of the system can ensure that it is actually treating your sewage.

Look for symptoms of a poorly functioning septic system. These include a pipe that goes directly to the lake or ground (even laundry water!), sewage surfacing in the yard or a ditch, sewage odors, high levels of nitrates or coliform bacteria in well water tests, or algae blooms and excessive plant growth in nearby ponds or lakes.

Owners of septic systems must inspect treatment tanks and remove solids if needed at least once every three (3) years.



## Property transfers

Except for a passing compliance inspection that is valid for five years on new systems and three years for older systems, a compliance inspection is required before a property is sold. Using the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's form, the compliance inspector must confirm:

- The tank(s) is watertight.
- There is no sewage discharge to the ground, surface or backup into the house.
- There is adequate vertical drain field separation from the water table and bedrock.

# SEPTIC SYSTEM BASICS

## Repair requirements

A septic system that discharges sewage to the ground surface or to surface water or has sewage backing up into the house poses an imminent threat to public health. These conditions have the potential to immediately and adversely affect or threaten public health or safety. After being notified by the local municipality, a homeowner has 30 days to repair the system and resolve the problem, and 10 months to permanently upgrade the system.

## Existing Systems

Compliance inspections are required when any of the following conditions occur:

- When a construction permit is required to repair, modify, or upgrade an existing system;
- Anytime there is an expansion of use of the building being served by an existing SSTS which may impact the performance of the system;
- Anytime there is a change in the use of the property being served by an existing SSTS which may impact the performance of the system;
- When an operating permit is to be renewed;
- Prior to the sale or transfer of real property served by an existing SSTS, unless the following requirement is met:
  - a. A compliance inspection has been performed and a certificate of compliance has been issued for the SSTS within three (3) years if the SSTS is older than five (5) years or within five (5) years if the SSTS is less than five (5) years old prior to the intended date sale or transfer of the real property, unless evidence is found identifying an imminent threat to public health and safety.

## SSTS Ordinance

See Empire Township Zoning Ordinance 400 - Section 6, Performance Standards,  
[http://www.township.empire.mn.us/vertical/sites/%7BC2524253-F75F-408D-8923-A2A3D0993A19%7D/uploads/400 - Zoning Ordinance.pdf](http://www.township.empire.mn.us/vertical/sites/%7BC2524253-F75F-408D-8923-A2A3D0993A19%7D/uploads/400_-_Zoning_Ordinance.pdf)

or Dakota County Ordinance 113, Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems  
<https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/Ordinances/Documents/CountyOrdinance113.pdf>

for additional information regarding septic systems.