

## Important Information about Your Aerobic Septic System

Septic systems protect human health and the environment by safely recycling wastewater back into the natural environment. Septic systems treat wastewater as well as, or better than, municipal treatment systems at a reasonable cost when properly designed, installed, operated, and maintained. *However, treatment diminishes if these systems are neglected or turned off, if harmful chemicals are poured down the drain, or if the ambient temperature is too low. The aerobic process reduces the effluent's ammonia content, but may increase its nitrate content.*

### Warning Signs of Aerobic System Problems

- Alarms or lights going off
- Any changes in the system's normal operating sound
- Any changes in the normal color of the wastewater in the aeration chamber (for example, if the color is grayish brown rather than chocolate brown, this can sometimes indicate problems)
- Excessive solids, foam, or scum in the unit
- Plumbing backups
- Sewage odors in the house or yard

Federal, state, and local regulation of on-site systems focuses on proper treatment of sewage to protect citizens, communities, and the environment. In Rockwall County, as in all counties in Texas, a homeowner is required to:

- Have a maintenance contract;
- Be aware that the system must operate properly (e.g., having a contract is not enough; the homeowner is responsible for making sure the system operates properly).

Your Aerobic system includes an audible alarm which will activate in the event of a problem. There is also a red light on top the electrical outlet box that when on signals a problem. Whenever the alarm or light is noticed a call should be placed to your septic system contractor.

### Aerobic System Maintenance

It is important that mechanical components in aerobic systems receive regular inspection and maintenance. For example, air compressors sometimes need to be oiled, and vanes, filters, and seals may need to be replaced. Malfunctions are common during the first few months after installation. In most cases, homeowners do not have the expertise to inspect, repair, and maintain their own systems.

Service visits will most likely be carried out by the dealer or another independent service organization that has an agreement with the manufacturer. In other cases, health departments will have maintenance management programs, such as sanitary districts, for aerobic systems and other onsite systems in their area.

### **Aerobic System Do's and Do Nots**

- \* Do maintain the contract service arrangement offered by the manufacturer after the initial two-year period has expired (unless your community offers its own management program). It is extremely important that aerobic systems receive regular maintenance.
- \* Do keep your system accessible for inspections and pumping, yet protected from unauthorized entrance. If access to your system is locked, make sure that your service contractor has a key.
- \* Do conserve water to avoid overloading the system. Be sure to repair any leaky faucets or toilets.
- \* Do divert other sources of water, like roof drains, house footing drains, and sump pumps away from the aerobic system.
- \* Do become familiar with how your own particular system operates, and the way it looks, sounds, and smells when it is working correctly.
- \* Do call a service professional whenever you experience problems with your system, whenever the alarm is activated, or whenever there are any signs of system failure.
- \* Do keep detailed records about your aerobic system, including a map of where it is, and general information, such as model name, capacity, state license, date installed, contract service agreement, records of service visits, and maintenance performed. This way, you may be able to identify problems before they become serious and alert your service provider to anything unusual.
- \* Do be sure to ask your service provider questions about how to know if your unit is malfunctioning.
- \* Don't allow anyone to drive over or park on any part of the system.
- \* Don't make or allow unauthorized repairs or changes to your aerobic system without obtaining the required health department permits.

\* Don't use your toilet as a trash can or poison your treatment system and the groundwater by pouring harmful chemicals down the drain. Harsh chemicals can kill the beneficial bacteria that treat your wastewater.

\* Don't use a garbage disposal without checking with your local regulatory agency to make sure that your aerobic system can accommodate this additional waste.

\* Don't attempt to clean or perform maintenance on any sealed aerobic unit or any sealed aerobic unit components.

### **Do Not Flush**

\* Coffee grounds\* dental floss\* disposable diapers\* kitty litter\* sanitary napkins\* tampons\* cigarette butts\* condoms\* gauze bandages\* fat, grease, or oil\* paper towels, do not use drain cleaner like "Liquid Plumber".

\* And never flush chemicals, such as:\* paints\* varnishes\* thinners\* waste oils\* photographic solutions\* pesticides

These items can overtax or destroy the biological digestion taking place within your system.

Aerobic system manufacturers provide the following recommendations of what a home owner should not do stating that proper system operation starts within the home. Care and concern must be taken in order to receive the full benefits of the system. The following is a list of items that should never be introduced into your system:

1. Garbage disposals should be used sparingly if at all. Remember, this increases the BOD loading (e.g., The amount of dissolved oxygen consumed in five days by biological processes breaking down organic matter) of the waste going into the system.

2. Alcohols from mixed drinks and beer will have an adverse effect on the unit's metabolism in large volume.

3. Toilet tablets or toilet deodorants

4. Heavy paper products

5. Latex condoms

6. Plastic products

7. Metals
8. Hair
9. Bandages
10. Coffee grounds
11. Shrimp and egg shells
12. Female products
13. Rid X
14. Drain O and Liquid Plumber
15. Discharge from water softeners
16. Oil, Grease, and Fats
17. Diapers and baby wipes
18. Bleaches and liquid fabric softeners
19. Ammonia and harsh chemicals
20. Rust, Lime, and Calcium removers

Cleaners and disinfectants can be used as long as the manufacturers' instructions are observed. It is not a good idea to use powdered detergents in wash water as they contain products that may potentially clog up parts of the system. Tide and Cheer contain chemicals too strong for use with the some Aerobic Systems and should be avoided where possible. System owners should be prepared to monitor the unit for signs of malfunction.