

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Septic Systems and Flooding Events

If you are unsure where your Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (Septic System) is, contact the St. Clair County Health Department at 810-987-5306 or environmentalhealth@stclaircounty.org for advice and assistance.

Flooding can impact all parts of the septic system. This includes the septic tank(s) along with the soil treatment area (drainfield/absorption area).

What can I do DURING a flood?

- Mark, or flag, the boundaries of your tank and drainfield to keep off that area until the floodwaters recede.
 - This area could become hazardous and contaminated if the tank structure becomes impaired.
- There is an electrocution risk if a pump chamber is used that contains a pump serviced by electricity.
 - Make sure that electricity to the pump is turned off to prevent electrocution risks.
- To prevent backup into the house, restrict wastewater from entering into a flooded septic system.
 - Drastically reduce water use in the house.
 - Make sure all sump pumps and water softener discharges are NOT connected to the septic system.
 - All gutter downspouts should be directed away from the system to carry water away from the site.
- Do not open the septic tank for pumping while the soil is still saturated. Mud and silt may enter the tank and end up in the drainfield.
- Do not dig into the tank or drainfield area while the soil is still wet or flooded. Try to avoid any work on or around the disposal field with heavy machinery while the soil is still wet. These activities will ruin the soil conductivity.

What Shouldn't I Do?

- DO NOT attempt to service a septic system.
 - A septic system contains a potential for disease transmission, dangerous gases, electrical shock and substances that can be hazardous to your health and safety.
- DO NOT park or drive over any part of the system. The soil can become compacted and the basic function of the system can become restricted.
- DO NOT place heavy machinery, dumpsters, or building material on any part of the septic system. The tank could collapse from the weight and the pipes can become dislodged in the drainfield.
- DO NOT leave the opening to a septic tank uncovered. Assure that all the hole openings are immediately secured, repaired or replaced if the covers have shifted, broken, or lost in the flood.
 - This is to prevent debris from falling into the septic tank along with maintaining safety from people falling into the tanks during clean-up activities.

REMEMBER:

- Whenever the water table is high or your sewage system is threatened by flooding, there is a risk that sewage will back up into your home. The only way to prevent this backup is to relieve pressure on the system by using it less.
- If your water well has also been flooded, it could be contaminated. Contact the St. Clair County Health Department for questions if your well is safe to drink and how to test the water.