

## Routine Maintenance

**All septic tanks need to be pumped out on a regular basis.** Pumping is essential to maintain a well-functioning system and to prevent premature system failure. Depending on the size of your tank and how it is used pumping should be done every three to five years. Pumping should be done by a licensed pumper with the proper equipment.

## Signs of Possible Trouble

**The following signs are not definitive proof of a failing system, but they are cause for serious concern and prompt action.** You should call environmental health immediately if you notice any of these symptoms.

- Gurgling sounds in your pipes or drains
- Pooled liquid or mushy spots in your yard
- Lush green grass or weeds in unwatered portions of your yard, during dry weather
- A buildup of aquatic weeds or algae in lakes or ponds adjacent to your home
- The presence of nitrates or bacteria in your well water
- Unpleasant odors in or around your house
- **Sewage backup in your drains or toilets is more indicative of a failure, and is a violation of county code.**

## For Additional Information

Environmental Health is an excellent source of information on wastewater disposal. We can provide:

- ★ Answers to your questions
- ★ The size and location for your system
- ★ Checklists for septic system inspection

Please contact  
Plumas County  
Environmental Health  
for further information.

### We are located in Quincy at the courthouse annex:

270 County Hospital Road, Room 106  
Quincy, California 95971

### And in Chester at the Civic Center:

222 First Ave., P.O. Box 1194  
Chester, California 96020  
(530) 258-2536



Visit us on the web at:  
[www.countyofplumas.com](http://www.countyofplumas.com)

# Septic System Owners Guide



*Courtesy of*

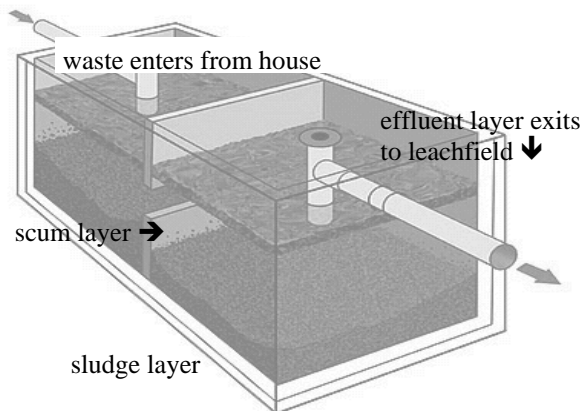
Plumas County  
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Approximately 25 million American homes rely on septic systems, as well as many commercial establishments in suburban and rural areas. Septic systems are a simple, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly way to treat wastewater from your household or business.

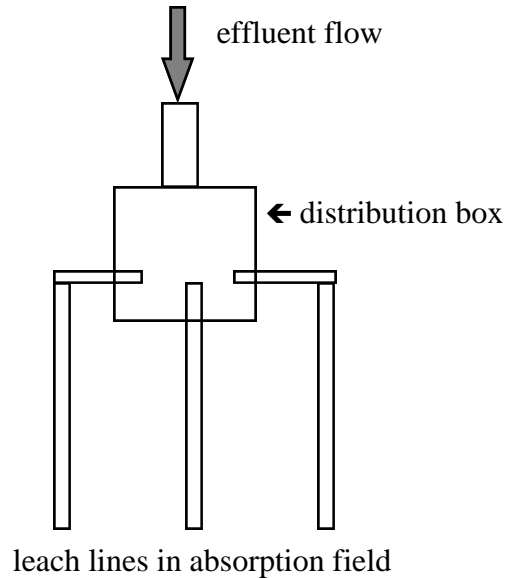
## Septic System Basics

The two major parts of a septic system are the **septic tank** and the **leachfield**.

**The Septic Tank** - Wastewater flows from the house into the septic tank where settling occurs. The waste divides into three layers. The heavier solids sink to the bottom of the tank to form the sludge layer, while the lighter solids (like grease, or soapsuds) float to the top to form the scum layer. The mostly clear liquid in the middle layer is the effluent.



**The Leachfield** - The effluent enters a distribution box, which evenly distributes the flow to the leach lines, which are perforated pipes, in the absorption field. The soil then acts to filter and purify the effluent.



## Septic System Maintenance

Septic system maintenance isn't difficult, time-consuming or expensive, but it is **essential!** A failed septic system is a big deal! It poses serious health risks and environmental hazards. A failed septic system is costly to replace.

You can guard against premature failure of your system through simple daily care and routine maintenance.

## Simple Daily Care

✓ **Water conservation** Conserving water is the single most beneficial action you can take to protect your septic system.

✓ **Minimize the amount of solids going into your system.** Your system is designed to handle human waste, toilet paper and water from appliances. Use your garbage disposal sparingly. Do not put solid waste into your system.

✓ **Do not put chemicals into your system** Limit your use of household cleaners such as bleach and detergents. *Never* dispose of toxic chemicals in your septic system!

✓ **Divert surface water away from your septic tank and leachfield.**

✓ **Don't plant trees, or deep rooted water loving plants over your system.**

✓ **Avoid driving or parking on your leachfield area.**

✓ **Avoid penning livestock or locating arenas on your leachfield area.**

