



Backups, Leaks and Odors

If sewage is backing up inside your home's drains or surfacing outside, or if you notice odors around your home, your septic system may be failing. The most likely culprits:

- **Lack of maintenance** - If solid waste builds up too high, it can be forced out of the tank and into the drainfield, where it clogs the gravel and soil. This can cause wastewater to back up or erupt from the ground.
- **Missing, broken or worn fittings** - Tee fittings and baffles are tank parts designed to slow down the inflow and outflow of wastewater. The goal - to give bacteria time to digest waste and allow for separation of solids, grease, and scum from liquid. If these fittings are broken, the system fails to work as it should.
- **Age** - Some septic tanks that were permitted under the outdated "perc" soil testing method are installed in soils that would not pass a site review today. Also, different factors, including routine maintenance, can affect the longevity of a septic system. No septic system is designed to last forever.

- Incorrect installation - Tanks facing backward, unlevel drainfield parts, soil compacted by heavy equipment - a lot can go wrong during installation.
- Improper use - When more people live in a home than the home was designed for, it can create problems. For instance, a septic tank designed for a three bedroom home that is later converted to rental property that "sleeps 12" will be prone to failure.

Flooding - What to Do



When grass outlines the tank or drainfield, it's a sign of a leak or other problem.



An exposed septic tank pit filled to ground level with nasty looking backed-up septic tank waste.

Your Legal Responsibility

If DHEC receives a complaint about a failing septic system or tracks a pollution issue to a septic tank, the owner will receive a notice telling them they are in violation of **Regulation 61-56, Onsite Wastewater Systems**, and must repair their failing septic tank system.

S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) does not provide any funding or financing options for individual homeowners to help repair or replace failing septic systems or new home septic system installation.

Save Money

Regularly inspecting your septic system and pumping (by **DHEC licensed septic tank contractors or pumpers**) are the best and cheapest way to keep your septic system in good working order.