



What is a Septic System?

A septic system is made up of a tank and a drainfield. It is designed to treat and dispose of domestic wastewater through a combination of natural processes. When properly installed and maintained, a septic system can render wastewater ecologically safe.

Why are Septic Systems Necessary?

Safe treatment and disposal of domestic wastewater protects public health and the environment while preventing drinking water pollution and the spread of disease.

Connection to a wastewater treatment facility is not always available (i.e. rural areas, small communities).

How Does a Septic System Work?

1. Household wastewater is flushed.
2. Wastewater flows into the septic tank.

3. Heavy and light solids are broken down by bacteria that reside in the septic tank and form the scum and sludge layer.
4. Wastewater flows out of the tank into the drainfield (the scum and sludge layers remain in the tank).
5. In the drainfield, wastewater is absorbed by the soil and is broken down by natural processes.

Septic systems, like private wells, are the homeowner's responsibility. An improperly used or maintained septic tank system can affect an entire community by causing one or more of the following problems: a breeding area for mosquitoes and other insects, undesirable odors, costly damage caused by sewage backing up inside the home, the spread of serious diseases, and pollution of groundwater, wells, rivers, and lakes.

How to Apply for a Septic System permit?

For information on how to apply for a septic system permit, please visit our [Permits, Licenses, and Reports](#) page.

South Carolina's Challenge

Some septic systems fail to work properly, usually because of poor maintenance. Don't let yours be one of them —