

# SEPTIC TANK USER GUIDELINES

## WHAT IS A SEPTIC TANK?

Septic tanks are simple to operate. A septic tank consists of the tank itself and a soakaway below ground level. A septic tank is a type of settlement tank intended to provide suitable conditions for the decomposition of organic matter which allows solids to settle at the bottom as sludge. Often a hard scum or crust forms on the top of the liquid.

Liquid effluent from the septic tank then flows into a soakaway. A soakaway can be either a large permeable chamber, or a system of perforated drains which allow the liquid to 'soakaway' beneath the ground level.

Tanks can be of various types. Those with more than one compartment produce better quality effluent than single compartment tanks.

## HOW DOES A SEPTIC TANK WORK?

Raw sewage from the home is fed into the septic tank. Naturally occurring bacteria, which thrive in the absence of oxygen, partially digest the raw sewage. The primary purpose of the tank is to separate the solids from the liquids, as sewage flows through it. Sludge accumulates at the bottom of the tank and has to be removed periodically. Liquid effluent then flows into a soakaway.

## HOW TO KEEP A SEPTIC TANK WORKING EFFICIENTLY?

Many factors influence the degree of efficiency of a septic tank. These factors include the size of the tank and frequency of cleaning. To properly maintain a septic tank these guidelines should be followed;

1. The general advice from the EAW recommends that septic tanks should be emptied, or "de-sludged", once a year.
2. Don't allow large amounts of grease and fat to enter the septic tank system. This will lead to blockages and may permanently damage the soakaway.
6. Don't wash paint brushes in the sink or allow waste solvents, such as white spirit, or waste oils to enter your drains and septic tank.
7. Do not flush unsuitable material down the toilet. Including facial tissues, nappies, tampons, sanitary towels, cleaning clothes and paper towels. Do not use excessive amounts of loo paper.
8. Use 'eco-friendly' cleaning products and minimise their use. Reduce detergent use and drain cleaners by minimizing the amount of hair and debris entering the drains. Destruction of bacteria will be caused by use of cleaning materials, e.g. detergents, bleaches, polishes, disinfectants, acids, sink tub cleaner, toilet cleaner and especially bleach.
9. Conserve water usage. Ensure taps are fully turned off, and report any leaks immediately.

