

Why it's important to maintain your septic tank



Unless your property is connected to the main sewage network, it is likely you will have an on-site wastewater disposal system called a septic tank.

This septic tank will be buried somewhere on your property and will process all wastewater from your toilet, kitchen, bathroom and laundry.

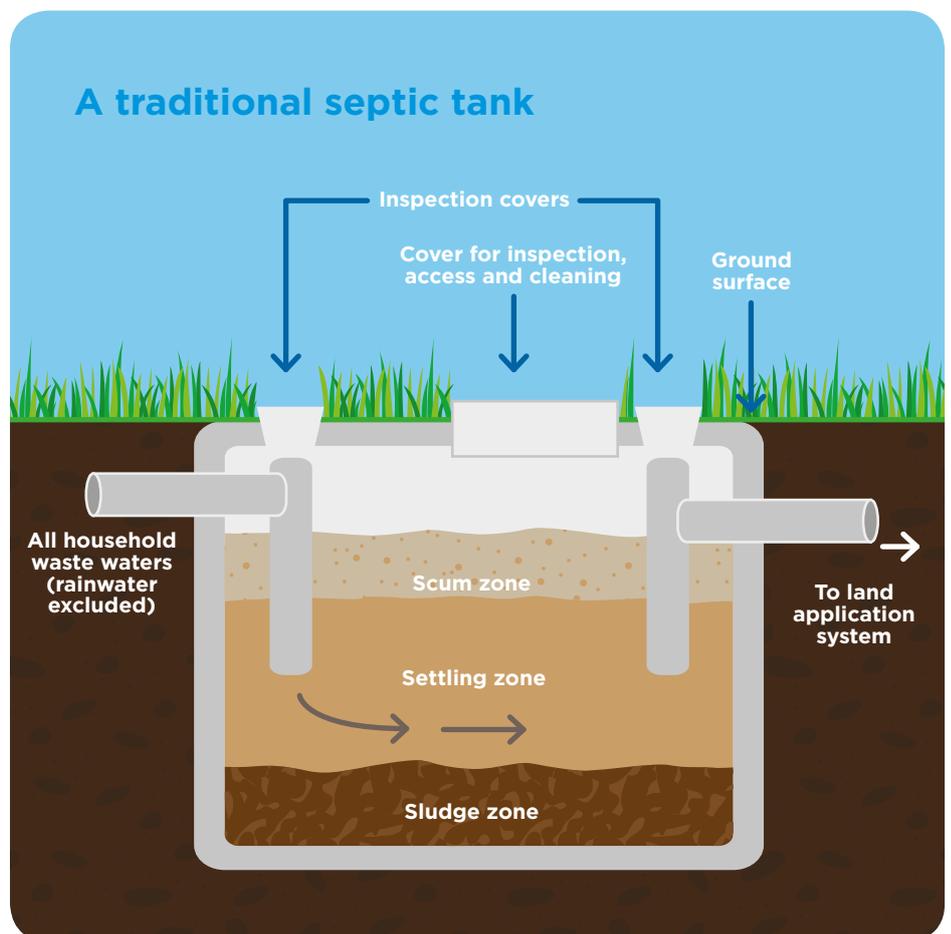
Unless properly maintained a septic tank can become a serious health hazard, by spreading disease and contaminating water.

To ensure this doesn't happen, septic tanks need to be regularly maintained by an approved contractor.

How do they work?

Wastewater discharges into the septic tank and the heavier solids (sludge) settle to the bottom of the tank, while fats (scum) float to the top. This sludge and scum decomposes in the tank.

The remaining liquid flows out of the tank and discharges into a soakage area. There are also other materials, like sand, soil and minerals, that are not able



to be broken down and are retained within the tank.

Why do I need to maintain our septic tank?

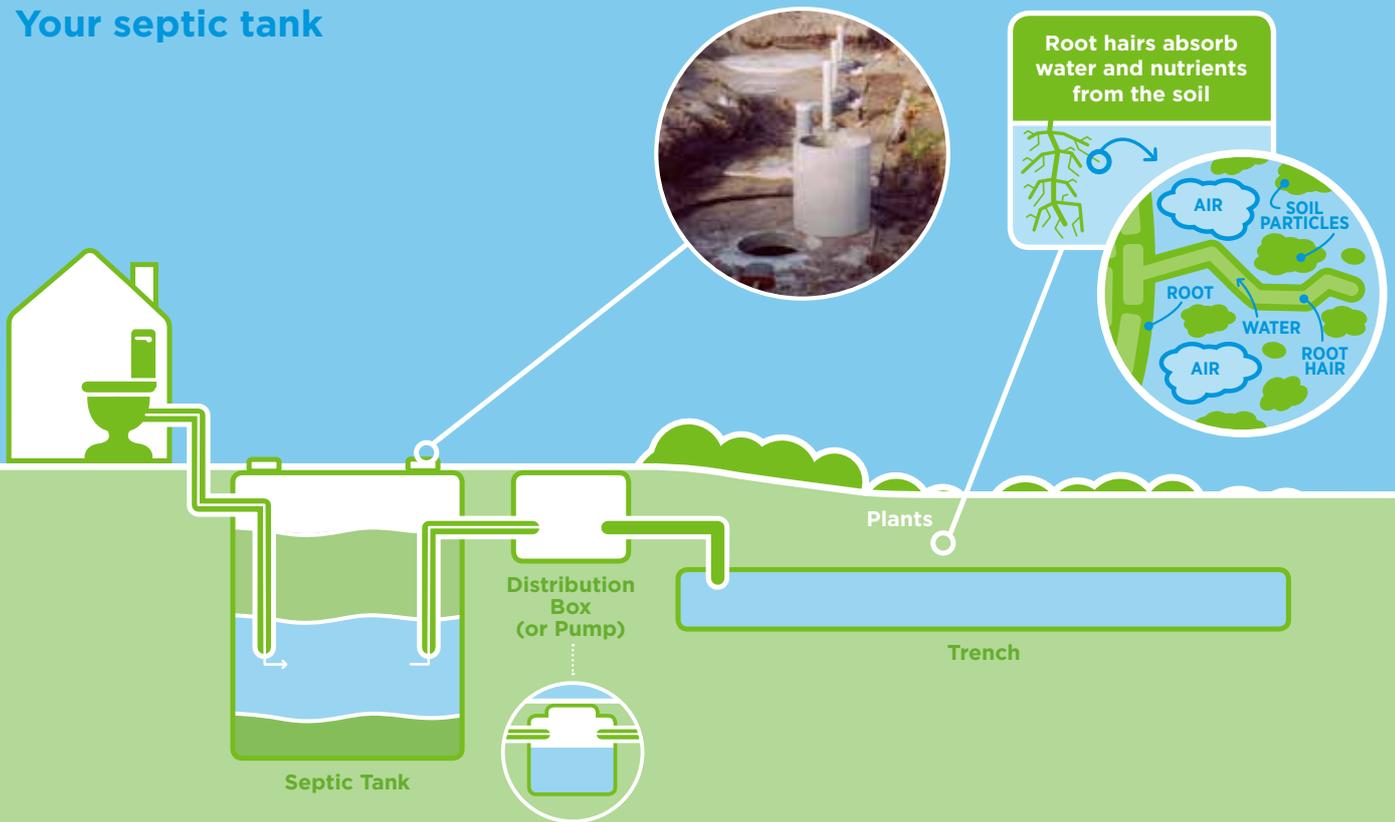
Over time the volume of sludge and scum in a septic tank starts to build up. Because of this

build up, the operating volume and overall effectiveness of the septic tank is reduced.

When do I need to maintain my tank?

Tanks need to be regularly inspected by an approved contractor to ensure they are

Your septic tank



operating effectively. When the volume of sludge and scum reaches about one third of the total volume of the tank the septic tank should be regarded as “full”. Under normal circumstances, with four or five occupants in a dwelling, a tank will require emptying after three years of use. A small tank of less than 3000 litres will require emptying more frequently.

By measuring sludge and scum at the time the tank is being emptied, the contractor can determine when the next service is likely to be required.

How do I maintain my septic tank?

When a septic tank is full

it needs to be pumped out (emptied) by an approved contractor and removed to an authorised disposal facility (see our website for a list of approved contractors).

Where the property is in a Maintenance Zone, the contractor must send confirmation of the pump-out and the inspection report to the Regional Council.

We also encourage the installation of outlet filters. They operate by screening the discharge and prevent larger particles being carried over into the land application area. The filter will need to be installed by your drain layer (see our website for a list of approved

contractors) and cleaned at the same time as when the tank is pumped out. Regular blocking of the filter may indicate the tank needs pumping.

Other things you can do to improve the performance of your septic tank:

- Minimise water use
- Divert stormwater away from your land treatment area.
- Don't over-use powerful bleaches and disinfectants, or put chemicals or paint down the drain.

For further information contact Bay of Plenty Regional Council on 0800 884 880 and ask for Sam Weiss or Terry Long or visit www.boprc.govt.nz

