

Be Septic Smart: What Indiana Homeowners Should Know

When you think “curb appeal,” septic systems are probably out-of-sight, out-of-mind. But when it comes to preserving your daily comfort, hygiene and health – and preventing costly repairs, replacement or remediation – don’t bury your septic system at the bottom of your housing checklist.

Be a Septic-Smart Seller (and Buyer):

Indiana’s residential real estate seller’s disclosure requirements compel a homeowner to provide information on the existence and condition of, and any modifications to, the sewage and septic system based on their actual knowledge when a property is offered for sale.

It may be advisable for homebuyers to seek an inspection of the septic system.

The bottom line: It pays to keep up with routine maintenance and adopt common-sense daily habits to prolong the life of your system – to protect your investment, avoid major repair or replacement expenses and risking prospective buyers turning up their noses at the potential issues once your home hits the market.

The Basics:

A septic system carries waste from your home to a septic tank where solid material settles and separates – wastewater is filtered into a drainfield surrounding the tank, where microbes in the soil provide additional treatment.

The septic tank and drainfield should be designated on the plans for your home and the current condition of the system described on the Indiana Seller’s Residential Real Estate Disclosure if you are listing a home for sale or considering the purchase of an existing home.

Nearly a million Indiana homes are served by an on-site residential septic system rather than connecting to a public sanitary sewer system. It’s the homeowner’s responsibility to maintain these systems.

To keep the septic system healthy and functional, here are a few basic tips:

1. **Regularly inspect your system and pump your tank as necessary.** Septic systems should typically be inspected every 1-3 years, and the tank pumped as recommended by a professional.
2. **Use water efficiently and don’t dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.** Excessive water use puts strain on drainage pipes, and fats, grease or solids can clog the pipes or access to the drainfield (start by staggering use of water-based appliances).
3. **Don’t fail the flush test:** Flushing household trash can also clog or damage the septic system.
4. **Care for your drainfield.** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and livestock can damage your septic drainfield – don’t park, plant or pasture.
5. **Test at the tap:** Contamination of groundwater can occur when a septic system leaks due to improper maintenance; if you’re on a well, test your water regularly to be sure it’s safe (and catch issues in the septic system).

More Resources:



United States
EPA: About
Septic Systems



SepticSmart
Homeowners Guide
to Septic System



SepticSmart:
Quick Tips for a
Healthy System



More EPA
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Resources



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