

Dept. of Safety and Professional Services: Helps homeowners avoid septic system damage and costly repairs with septic smart week information and programming

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are teaming up to present Septic Smart Week 2021, an annual event focused on educating homeowners on the proper care and maintenance of their septic system. This year's awareness week will run from September 20-24.

About one third of Wisconsin's population uses onsite wastewater treatment, otherwise known as septic systems. This includes around two million people and over 750,000 households.

Onsite systems provide a sustainable, dependable, and affordable method for wastewater treatment. Not only does treatment of wastewater through the soil protect groundwater resources, but it also keeps the water within the watershed.

When properly installed and maintained, these systems help protect public health, preserve valuable water quality, and help ensure a community's economic vitality.

Failing septic systems can contaminate and harm human health and the environment by releasing bacteria, viruses, and household toxics to ground and surface water resources. These seven simple tips are important for protecting environmental health and preventing costly system replacement:

Protect It and Inspect It: Homeowners should have their system inspected every three years by a qualified professional. Advanced Treatment Units need inspection more frequently.

Think at the Sink: Avoid pouring fats, grease, and solids down the drain. These substances can clog a system's pipes and drainfield.

Don't Overload the Commode: Only put things in the drain or toilet that belong there. For example, flushable wipes, coffee grounds, dental floss, disposable diapers, feminine hygiene products, cigarette butts, and cat litter can all clog and potentially damage septic systems.

Don't Strain Your Drain: Be water-efficient and spread out water use. Fix plumbing leaks and install faucet aerators and water-efficient products. Spread out laundry and dishwasher loads throughout the day – too much water at once can overload a system that hasn't been pumped recently.

Shield Your Field: Remind guests not to park or drive on a system's drainfield, where the vehicle's weight could damage buried pipes or disrupt underground flow.

Pump your Tank: Routinely pumping your tank can prevent your septic system from premature failure, which can lead to groundwater contamination. Tanks should be pumped when necessary, typically every three to five years.

Test Your Drinking Water Well: If septic systems aren't properly maintained, leaks can contaminate well water. Testing your drinking water well is the best way to ensure your well water is free from contaminants.

Want to learn more about caring for your septic system and be able to ASK AN EXPERT about septic system installation and maintenance? **Wisconsin DSPS staff will be offering free one-hour webinars during Septic Smart Week. If you would like to find out more about YOUR septic system, register to attend one of the sessions [here](#).**

For information on SepticSmart Week or other tips on how to properly maintain your septic system, visit the EPA [website](#).

The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains

the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.