

## Tips for a Safer Septic System

- Never flush paper towels, newspapers, wrapping paper, rags or sticks into the system.
- Never allow large, irregular, intermittent or constant volumes of clear water into the system, as with a leaking toilet or faucet.
- Never over-use ordinary household cleaning chemicals that will be flushed into the system.
- Never pour out or empty hobby or home industry chemicals into the system.
- Never allow grease or other bulky waste to enter the system.
- Never flush toxic materials such as pesticides into the system.
- Never plant trees or shrubbery in the drainfield.
- Never allow vehicles (cars, trucks, etc.) to drive across or park on the drainfield. (Protect it from being crushed.)
- Never waste water.
- Never use chemical solvents to clean plumbing lines or a septic tank system.



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# Homebuyer's Guide to Septic Systems

As a homebuyer  
one of your first  
questions should be:

“Is this house on a septic system?”

If the answer is “yes” then an inspection of the system  
before you buy the house is recommended.

**Inspection Procedure** The inspection must be requested by a person having ownership of, control of, or use of a septic system. Persons allowed to perform this inspection are: master septic tank contractors, registered septic tank contractors, state-licensed plumbers and persons certified under section 381.0101, F.S. Health Department employees are excluded from performing these inspections. The inspector shall provide the person requesting the inspection a copy of the department Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems and written notice of their right to request an inspection based on part or all of the standards. This inspection procedure is not to be performed for septic systems that are in failure or that are increasing sewage flow or changing sewage characteristics.

**Tank Inspection** The septic tank must be pumped to determine its capacity. The suggested pumping frequency is 3–5 years. Visual inspection of the tank must be made when the tank is empty to detect cracks, leaks, or other defects. The presence and condition of components such as the outlet device, effluent filters, compartment walls and baffles will be noted in the inspection report. The condition and fit of the tank lid and access ports will also be part of the inspection.

**Drainfield Inspection** The drainfield area should be probed to determine its location and approximate size. The configuration and type of drainfield material found will also be noted. The inspector will note signs of previous failure, the condition of surface vegetation and any downspouts or drains that encroach or drain into the drainfield area. The soil will also be examined to estimate the elevation of the seasonal high water table in the area of the drainfield.

**Additional Components** If your septic system contains pumps, siphons or alarms, these additional components must be inspected. The dosing tanks will be inspected for integrity, approximate volume and material used in construction. The dosing pump will be checked to verify its operational status. A verification that the alarm is in working order will be performed. All other findings relating to these components will be noted in the inspection report.

**Assessment** The inspector shall provide a copy of a written signed inspection report to the person requesting the assessment. The front cover of the report shall indicate whether the system is or is not, in the professional opinion of the inspector, a sanitary nuisance. The report will also indicate any maintenance that needs to be performed on the system.

- Q:** Why would I request a voluntary septic system inspection?
- A:** These systems are underground and may have been out of use for some time. There is no way to assess their current condition without an inspection. Repairs or system replacements can be costly.
- Q:** Can the homebuyer request the inspection?
- A:** You should request the home owner or his agent to request the inspection.
- Q:** Can I request a partial inspection of my septic system?
- A:** Yes. While a complete inspection is recommended, the person requesting the inspection may, in writing, request parts of the inspection to be omitted.
- Q:** Where can I obtain a copy of the inspection protocol?
- A:** The inspector is required to provide you a copy of the protocol. A copy is also available on the Internet at [www.myfloridaeh.com](http://www.myfloridaeh.com) under onsite sewage.
- Q:** If the inspection report reveals that my septic system is substandard, will I be required to upgrade my system?
- A:** The inspection report is for the use of the person requesting it. No enforcement action will be initiated based on the report. It will contain assessments of the septic system, including any damaged, defective or missing components. The report will document any condition that would interfere with the proper functioning of the system. The report is not intended to penalize, but to allow you to make an informed decision.
- Q:** If the inspection report reveals that my septic system is substandard and I wish to correct the deficiencies, what would be my next step?
- A:** Contact your local county health department as they are responsible for issuing the construction permit.
- Q:** If the inspection report states that my septic system is in proper working condition, can I assume that my system will function for years to come?
- A:** No. The inspection is designed to assess the condition of a system at a particular moment in time. The inspection is not designed to determine precise code compliance, nor provide information to demonstrate that the system will adequately serve the use to be placed upon it by this or any subsequent owner.
- Q:** If I feel that the voluntary inspection was not performed in accordance with the department Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems, what recourse do I have?
- A:** You may file a complaint with your local county health department or call the Bureau of Onsite Sewage Programs Septic Tank Complaint line at 1-888-993-9813.