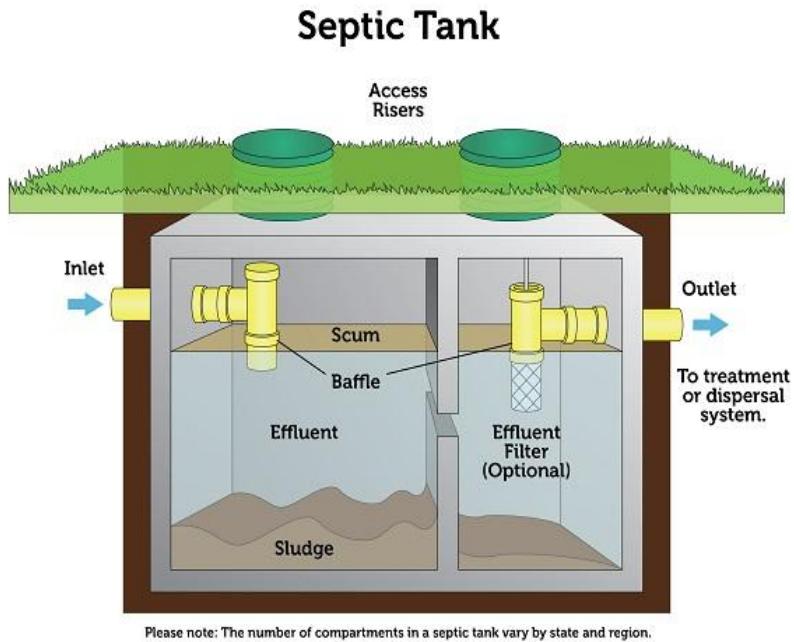


Maintain your septic system

Failed septic systems are a perennial problem in communities that depend on these systems to dispose of



Picture from <https://www.epa.gov/septic/types-septic-systems>

wastewater. Many Hopewell Township residences have septic systems, and, over the years, some of these have lost their ability to properly treat wastewater. In some cases, these failures are the result of improper siting or construction of these systems when they were first installed. But many problems are caused by improper maintenance by septic system owners. Homeowners may not even be aware that they have a septic system that must be maintained.

Without regular maintenance, most septic systems are likely to eventually fail. Proper maintenance is usually as simple as having the septic tank

pumped out every three years or so. Regular pumping prevents greases (scum) and sludge from flowing into, and eventually clogging, the leaching field, which functions as the treatment or dispersal system.

Build-up of sludge and scum is inevitable in a septic system whether it is functioning well or not. If these materials build up to the level of the outlet (see picture) they begin to flow into the leaching field and can clog it. Once a leaching field is clogged, it is virtually impossible to unclog it. With a clogged leaching field, wastewater no longer has a functional pathway into the underlying layers of the soil where wastes can decompose aerobically. Instead, untreated wastewater can flow to the surface, leading to the odors and unsanitary conditions that are the hallmarks of a failed septic system. Untreated wastewater can be a health hazard to people, pets, and wildlife.

Failing septic systems in a neighborhood can harm property values too, and in this way one homeowner's problem can become a problem to neighbors. For this reason, some municipalities have adopted rules that require registration of septic systems and proof of regular septic system maintenance. So far, Hopewell Township has elected to rely on residents' awareness and sense of civic responsibility to prevent widespread septic system failures by maintaining their septic systems with regular septic tank pumping. There are many contractors in the area who can pump out a septic system, and they can inspect the tank to be sure its sound as well. It doesn't matter what time of year the job is done, as long as it's done regularly, so keeping a record of when the tank was last pumped is important. Don't wait until problems bubble to the surface! If you are the owner of a septic system, your neighbors and your Township are depending on you to maintain it!