
Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department Celebrates SepticSmart Week

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), supported by state and local governments, the private sector, communities, and academia, will sponsor its eighth SepticSmart Week 2020, Sept. 14-18, an annual event focused on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems.

“Septic Smart week is an opportunity to highlight one of those areas of our homes and businesses that are often forgotten about until it is too late,” stated Eric Johnston, Environmental Director. “Just like our vehicles or other important items in our lives, on-site septic systems must be maintained and serviced to keep them working properly for many years.”

More than one-fifth of U.S. households utilize an individual onsite system or small community cluster septic system to treat their wastewater. These systems treat and dispose of relatively small volumes of wastewater and include a wide range of individual and cluster treatment options to process household and commercial sewage. These systems go by such names as septic, decentralized wastewater treatment, cluster, package plants, on-lot, individual sewage disposal, and private sewage.

EPA’s SepticSmart initiative is a nationwide public education effort offering educational resources to homeowners to explain how septic systems work and provide tips on how to properly maintain them. SepticSmart Week 2020 are encouraged to create public awareness about helpful tips, such as:

- **Think at the Sink!:** What goes down the drain has a big impact on your septic system. Fats, grease, and solids can clog a system’s pipes and drain field.
- **Don’t Overload the Commode!:** A toilet is not a trash can. Disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, and cat litter can damage a septic system.
- **Don’t Strain Your Drain!:** Use water efficiently and stagger use of water-based appliances. Too much water use at once can overload a system that hasn’t been pumped recently.
- **Shield Your Field!:** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and livestock can damage your septic drain field.
- **Keep It Clean!:** Contamination can occur when a septic system leaks due to improper maintenance. Be sure your drinking water is safe to drink by testing it regularly.
- **Protect It and Inspect It!:** Regular septic system maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars in repairs and protect public health.
- **Pump Your Tank!:** Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regularly intervals as recommended by a professional and/or local permitting authority. Recommendation for septic tank pumping is 3-5 years for residential and more frequently for commercial use.

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