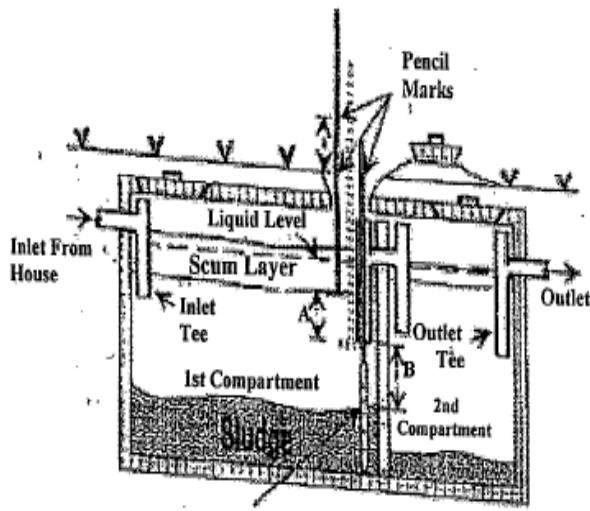


Inspecting Your Septic Tank

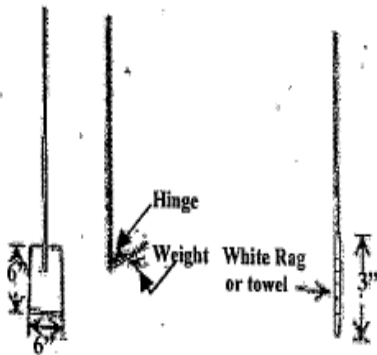
Measuring the Scum Level

Measuring the Sludge Level



Black Color Distinguishes Sludge Layer From Liquid
 Pump Out Tank When: "A" is 3" or Less or "B" is 12" or Less

Scum Measuring Devices Sludge Measuring Device



This procedure is for determining the distance between the bottom of the scum layer and the bottom of the outlet baffle or tee.

The procedure is for determining the distance from the bottom of the outlet baffle or tee to the top of the sludge layer.

1. Establish a convenient reference point, such as a stick laid on the ground across the hole.
2. Attach a 6 inch square board to the bottom of a stick at least 6 inches long.
3. At the outlet end of your tank's first compartment, carefully push through the scum layer to find the bottom of the baffle or tee.
4. Mark your stick at the reference point to indicate the bottom of the baffle or tee.
5. Raise the stick until you feel or see the stick contact the bottom of the scum layer.
6. Mark your stick again at the reference point to indicate the bottom of the sludge.
7. If the two pencil marks are 3 inches or less apart, the tank needs to be pumped out. If the top of the scum is within 1 inch of the top of the outlet baffle, the tank needs to be pumped.
8. Lay the stick aside for later comparison with the sludge level stick.

1. Wrap 3 feet of a white rag or old toweling around the bottom of a stick at least 6 feet long and fasten it with pate or string.
2. Carefully lower the stick to the bottom of the first compartment. To avoid pushing it through the scum layer, lower the stick behind the outlet baffle or through the outlet tee.
3. Hold the stick in the tank for a few minutes to allow sludge particles to adhere to the towel. Mark the stick at the reference point to indicate the bottom of the tank.
4. Hold the stick in the tank for a few minutes to allow sludge particles to adhere to the towel. Mark the stick at the reference point to indicate the bottom of the tank.
5. Lay the stick beside the scum stick. Line up the top pencil marks.
6. Measure the distance from the bottom of the scum stick to the top of the dark stain on the sludge stick.
7. If the distance is 12 inches or less, your tank needs to be pumped.

Septic Tank Maintenance

The lack of septic tank maintenance can cause sewage to back up into your house or solids to overflow to the drainfield. Once solids leave through the tank outlet, they can quickly clog a drainfield to the point where a new one is required. Most septic tanks need to be pumped every 3 to 5 years, depending on the tank size, and the amount and type of solids entering the tank. The inspection of the sludge and scum level is the only way to determine when a tank needs to be pumped. This is not necessarily a pleasant task, but can be done relatively easily. Septic tank pumping firms are available to perform this inspection.

Other Important Maintenance Information

1. Special septic tank additives will not reduce the need for regular pumping. These products can even cause solids to carry over to the drainfield causing early system failure. Some of these compounds have been shown to pollute the groundwater.
2. Materials not easily decomposed, including sanitary napkins, coffee grounds, cooking fats, bones, disposable diapers, and cigarette butts should never be flushed into a septic tank. They will not degrade in the tank, and will increase the need for more frequent tank pumping. They also can clog inlets, outlets, and the drainfield.
3. When pumping, leaving solids in the septic tank to aid in the starting of the system is not necessary. However, the septic tank must not be disinfected, washed, or scrubbed.
4. When the septic tank manhole is open, check the condition of the inlet and outlet baffles. Have the septic tank pumper replace them if they are in poor condition or are missing.

Preventative Maintenance Record			
Date	Work Done / Comments	Firm	Cost

5. If you do not know where your septic tank is located, records of its location maybe available at your local health department. If no record exists, probing with a steel rod gently tapped into the ground, starting five feet from where the sanitary sewer leaves the house, should help you find it.
6. Septic tank pumpers are advertised in the yellow pages of the telephone directory. Lists of the licensed pumpers are also available from your local health department.
7. Garbage grinders should not be used unless additional capacity is built into the septic tank and drainfield. They use excessive amounts of water. The ground garbage increases the wastewater strength and the need for more frequent pumping of the tank.
8. Equipment is also commercially available to measure scum and sludge levels.
9. Never enter any septic tank. Poisonous gases or the lack of oxygen can be fatal. Any work on the tank should be done from the outside.
10. Keep accurate records of the location of your septic tank as well as dates when the tank has been inspected or pumped.