



# Food Establishments on Septic Systems



**Learn how to prevent system failures and  
protect your business!**

**Environmental Health  
Island County Public Health**

# SAFE SINK PRACTICES PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS

Septic systems at food establishments handle large volumes of water, soaps, toilet paper, and more. This means they work extra hard and need special care to keep running. If grease, food particles, or other materials enter your septic system, it may cause premature failure of your drain field or blockages in your sewer lines. System failures can be unexpected, costly, time-consuming to repair, and may even result in the closure of your business.



**This worst-case scenario can be avoided!** Make sure all staff are trained in using safe sink practices. It can be helpful to display reminders, like the sign above, in common areas and by the sink. By practicing safe sink behaviors, you can protect both your business and your patrons!



**Even simple signs can be helpful in the right areas like in bathrooms and by sinks. Use signs to remind customers and staff what can and can't go down the drain.**

# MEET YOUR SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Over the years, a septic system needs a team of professionals to help it function well. From design and construction, to maintenance and repairs, these professionals are here to help. You will need to become familiar with whom to contact and when. Always contact a licensed professional to perform work on your system. Island County Code states that it is the responsibility of the septic owner to maintain the system (8.07D.280 (E)). As the user of a septic system, it is very important that your business' practices don't harm the system.



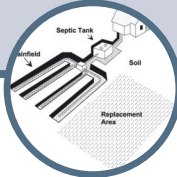
## Septic Maintenance Service Providers (MSPs)

Are licensed to perform required routine septic system inspections. They can help you troubleshoot septic issues and tell you when your tank needs to be pumped.



## Septic Tank Pumpers

Are licensed to remove tank contents. Call a septic pumper when your septic system is due for pumping.



## Septic Designers

Evaluate site locations and design new systems, alterations, and repairs. Call a designer **first** when your septic system needs alterations or repairs.



## Septic Installers

Are licensed to install permitted on-site sewage system designs, repairs, and alterations.



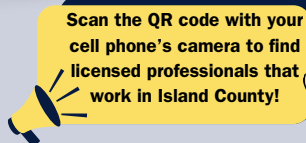
## Island County Sanitarian

Reviews and approves permits to make sure they are up to code. They also ensure systems are installed properly.



## Island County Food Inspector

Reviews and approves food permits, performs food inspections, and makes sure food establishments are safe.



Scan the QR code with your cell phone's camera to find licensed professionals that work in Island County!

scan  
ME!



Or use the URL -  
[www.islandcountywa.gov/678/Hiring-a-Professional--Industry-Contact](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/678/Hiring-a-Professional--Industry-Contact)

## WHAT ARE SEPTIC SYSTEM BEST PRACTICES?

Proper care of your business's septic system protects your investment and your business. If the septic system fails, your business will have to close until the issue gets fixed. A properly functioning septic system keeps your business open and your patrons safe.



Regularly inspect and maintain the septic system.



Monitor your water use to avoid overloading the septic system.



Remove food and grease from dishes and pans before washing them.



Use a strainer to prevent food scraps from going down the drain.



Use proper concentrations of bleach and other cleaners.



Protect your septic system components from parking and roof drains.



# SEPTIC SYSTEM BEST PRACTICES

## Fats, Oils & Grease

It is important to collect and dispose of fats, oils, and grease properly to protect your septic system. Scrape or wipe off food scraps and grease **before** washing dishes. Make sure to inspect your grease trap regularly, use safe sink practices, use proper concentrations of bleach and other cleaners, and never dump fats, oils, or grease down the drain.



### FATS

**Solid at room temperature**

Butter, Shortening,  
Margarine  
Peanut Butter  
Meat Trimmings  
Dairy: Cheeses, Milk,  
Cream, Sour Cream, ice  
Cream

### OILS

**Liquid at room temperature**

Vegetable Oil  
Canola Oil  
Olive Oil  
Corn Oil  
Salad Dressings  
Cooking Oils

### GREASE

**Turns to liquid during cooking, but solidifies when cooled**

Gravy  
Melted Meat Fat  
Bacon and Sausage  
Mayonnaise

## SEPTIC SYSTEM BEST PRACTICES



### Scrape the Plate

Food input can be a big problem in septic systems. Make sure to scrape **all** food scraps off of dishes and treat scraps as solid waste.

### Safe Sink Practices

Use a drain strainer in the sink to prevent fats, oils, grease, and food particles from entering your system.

**Avoid using a garbage disposal.** Solids can quickly add up, leading to increased maintenance costs and more frequent pumping.



## SEPTIC SYSTEM BEST PRACTICES



### **Avoid Overuse of Cleaners**

Beneficial bacteria in the septic system treat your wastewater and these bacteria can be harmed by the overuse of cleaners. Never dump leftover chemicals down the drain. Instead, properly dispose of those chemicals at locations that accept hazardous waste.

### **Be Mindful of Water Usage**

Your septic system is designed to treat a certain amount of wastewater each day. Try to space out using large amounts of water and fix any leaky water fixtures. Defrost food in the fridge instead of running water. Keep your eye out for leaks and be sure to repair any leaky fixtures as soon as possible.

Did you know that on average, a leaky fixture like your toilet or sink could add hundreds of gallons of water to your system in a single day?



# SEPTIC SYSTEM BEST PRACTICES

## Annual Maintenance:

A major part of caring for your system involves inspections and pumping. Both of these are done by licensed professionals. Please note *a pumping service is not an inspection.*



### **Annual Inspections - Required**

#### **Professional Needed:**

Maintenance Service Provider

#### **Benefits**

Reduced risk of unexpected issues and maximized lifespan.

#### **Frequency**

**Every 12 months!** A new inspection is required with **every** annual food license renewal.

**And** when you notice a problem.

### **Regular Pumping - Based on Usage**

#### **Professional Needed:**

Septic Tank Pumper

#### **Benefits**

Reduced risk of solids entering your drainfield and sewage flowing back into your business.

#### **Frequency**

When solids/grease make up for 30% of the tank's capacity. This depends on the size of your tank and overall use.



## **SEPTIC PROFESSIONALS**

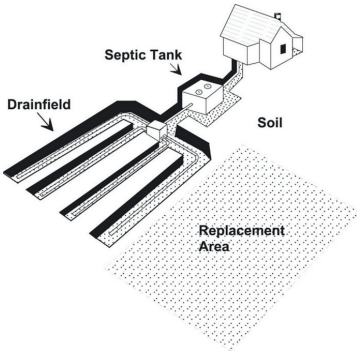
Use this QR code to find professionals that work in Island County!



[www.islandcountywa.gov/678/Hiring-a-Professional---Industry-Contact](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/678/Hiring-a-Professional---Industry-Contact)



# KNOW YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM



## The Basics

There are many different types of septic systems, but they all have the same basic parts: a septic tank, a soil dispersal component known as a "drain field", and a reserve/replacement area.

## Location & Maintenance History

Keep a copy of your septic system's map - also known as an "As-built" or "Record Drawing."

To obtain digital copies of your septic records visit the [Island County Public Portal](#).

### Instructions:

In the Portal you can view your septic system's As-built map, past maintenance records, and repair history. Start by searching for your parcel number or address.

*Look for entries titled:*

- On-Site Septic Permit
- On-Site Sewage System Evaluation
- On-Site Septic Pumping Report
- Asbuilt

View their official reports by clicking the link under "Report URL".

Your septic system As-built map will help you locate your septic tank, drain field, reserve area and other components. It is important to identify your in-ground components in order to identify signs of early system failure and **keep them safe from vehicle traffic and major landscaping projects.**



## SEPTIC RECORDS



**SCAN HERE!**

<https://co-island-wa.smartgovcommunity.com/Parcels/ParcelHome>

# A FAILED SEPTIC SYSTEM MEANS BUSINESS IS CLOSED



## **A functioning septic system keeps your business open and your patrons safe.**

Without an operational septic system, your business cannot run as usual. Washington State Retail Food Code 08350 states that if there is a backup into the business it is a health hazard and your business must close. Septic system repairs can be very expensive to fix. To protect your business and your patrons, it is important to take good care of your septic system and prevent failure. Make sure you are aware of proper septic system care and signs of a struggling and failing septic system.

## **Signs of a Failing Septic System:**

- Wastewater or sewage backing up into the building.
- Slow draining and gurgling pipes.
- Surfacing wastewater outside in the drain field, or a flooded septic tank. (Wet spots or tall lush grass around septic components even during the dry months.)
- Foul smells around septic components outside.
- Reoccurring system alarm.

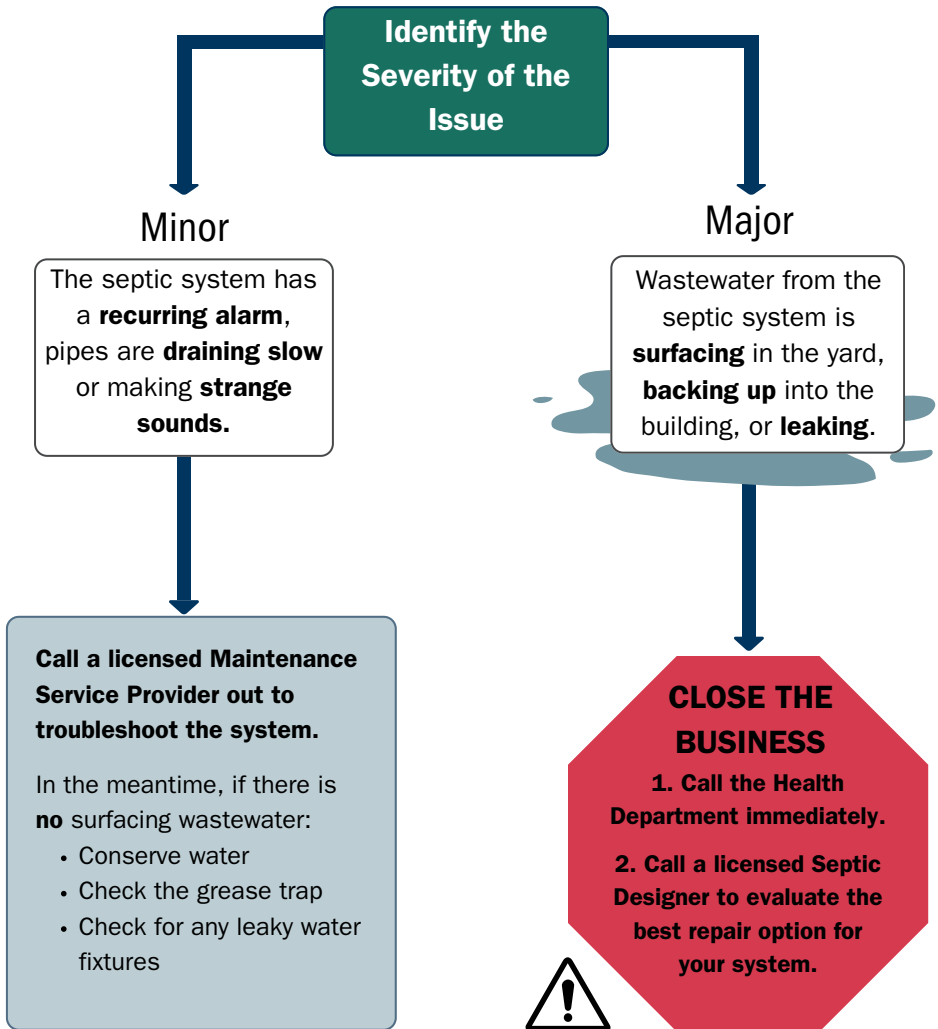
**PROPERTY OWNERS:**  
**CONTACT A LICENSED**  
**SEPTIC MAINTENANCE**  
**SERVICE PROVIDER IF**  
**YOU NOTICE ANY OF**  
**THESE SIGNS!**



[www.islandcountywa.gov/678/  
Hiring-a-Professional---Industry-  
Contact](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/678/Hiring-a-Professional---Industry-Contact)

**BUSINESS OWNERS**  
**THAT RENT:**  
**NOTIFY THE PROPERTY**  
**OWNER IMMEDIATELY IF**  
**YOU NOTICE ANY OF**  
**THESE SIGNS! FAILURES**  
**ARE A THREAT TO**  
**PUBLIC HEALTH.**

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR SYSTEM IS STRUGGLING OR FAILING



**Please Note:** If the Property Owner fails to address major septic issues and the business continues running, THIS IS A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT. Washington State Retail Food code 08350 states that the establishment **MUST** be temporarily closed until the issue is resolved.

If this occurs, contact Island County Public Health immediately at (360) 679-7350 to submit a Public Health complaint.

# HELPFUL RESOURCES

## Island County Public Health - Environmental Health

 [www.islandcountywa.gov/186/Environmental-Health](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/186/Environmental-Health)

### **Whidbey Office**

1 NE 6th Street  
Coupeville, WA 98239  
**360-679-7350**

### **Camano Office**

121 N East Camano Drive  
Camano Island, WA 98282  
**360-678-8261**

**Monday - Friday  
8:00 AM - 4:30 PM**


## Food Safety

 [foodsafety@islandcountywa.gov](mailto:foodsafety@islandcountywa.gov)

 [www.islandcountywa.gov/187/Food-Safety-Program](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/187/Food-Safety-Program)

 **360-679-7350**

## On-Site Sewage Systems

 [OperationsAndMaintenance@islandcountywa.gov](mailto:OperationsAndMaintenance@islandcountywa.gov)

 [www.islandcountywa.gov/190/Onsite-Sewage-Septic-Systems](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/190/Onsite-Sewage-Septic-Systems)

 **360-679-7350**

Island County Food Code:  
ICC 8.10D - Food Establishments and  
Food Service Workers

Island County On-Site Sewage Code:  
ICC 8.07D - On-Site Sewage  
Systems

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## Island County Hazardous Waste

*Moderate-Risk Waste (MRW) Facility*

### **Coupeville Solid Waste Complex**

20018 State Route 20  
Coupeville, WA 98239

**Monday - Friday**

**9:30 AM - 4:00 PM\***

**\*Businesses must make an appointment\***

 **(360) 678 - 8215**

 [www.islandcountywa.gov/643/Hazardous-Waste](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/643/Hazardous-Waste)

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## Grease Traps | Island County Pollution Prevention Assistance

Island County's Pollution Prevention Assistance (PPA) program offers *Small Change Vouchers* to help eligible businesses pay for:

- Grease trap cleaning
- Repair or installation of a grease trap
- Safer products for sewer or septic
- Waste disposal fees
- Spill kits
- Catch basins

 [PPA@islandcountywa.gov](mailto:PPA@islandcountywa.gov)

 [www.islandcountywa.gov/627/Pollution-Prevention-Assistance](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/627/Pollution-Prevention-Assistance)

 **(360) 679-7350**

