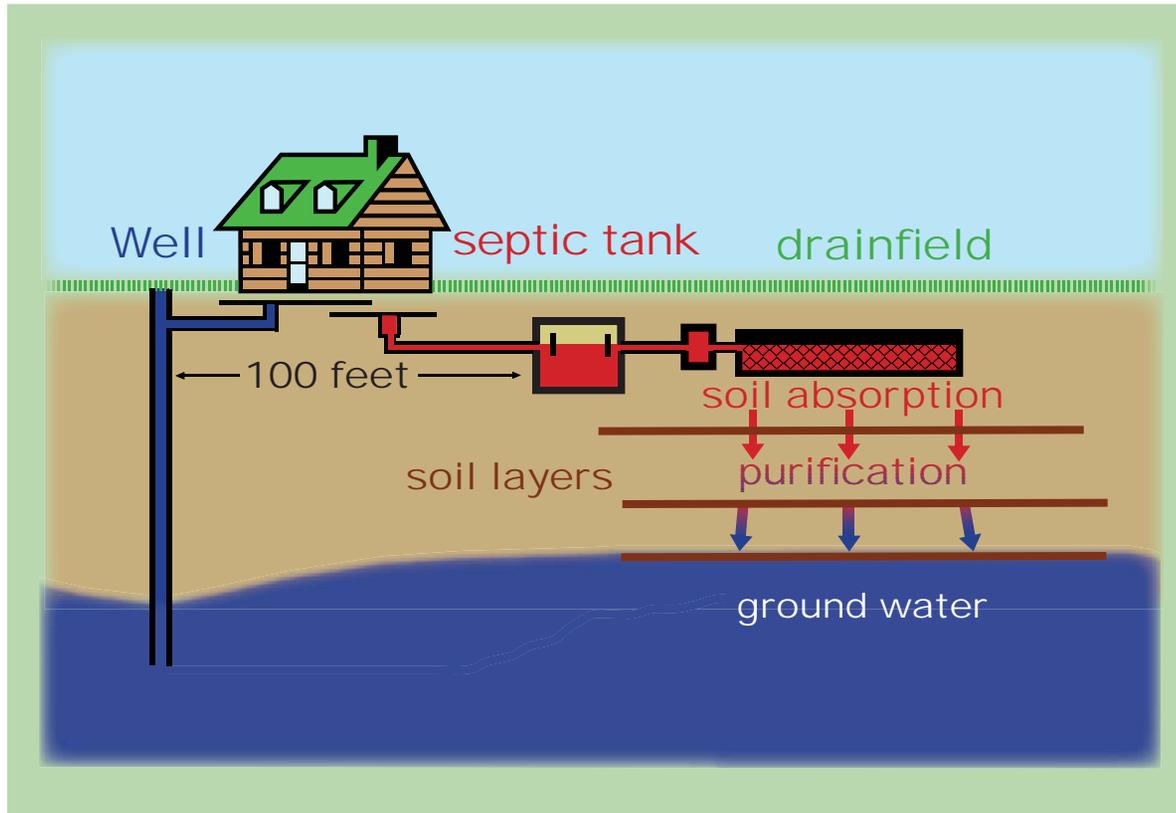


What lies beneath?

How your wastewater disposal system interacts with the water you drink

Septic systems are designed to neutralize potential pollution by biologically breaking down dissolved chemicals and waterborne nutrients and pathogens. The drainfield is the major location for this process in Alaska and depends on the presence of oxygen in the soil for the health of the microbes that break down the contaminants.



Ground water is the zone of saturated soil beneath the surface. The level of ground water can vary over time and distance and 'flows' at various rates depending on the soil structure. Saturated soils do not contain enough oxygen to support the microbes needed for septic waste removal. Drainfields need to be located above the saturated soil (groundwater) to be effective.

In Alaska the **drainfield** needs to be:

- 4 feet above the water table at maximum water table elevation (high water season)
- 6 feet above impervious strata, bed rock or clay layers
- 4 feet of soil cover over the system to prevent freezing of the system from above
- 100 feet from a water body (pond, lake, wetland, stream)
- 100 feet from drinking water wells

If the soil is compressed due to vehicle traffic or compacted by activities such as foot traffic, the drain field will no longer hold air spaces and therefore no longer function for waste removal.

If the drain field is compromised then it has to be replaced requiring more land and costly installation.



Septic System Maintenance

1. Pump your tank every two years.
2. Don't use a garbage disposal.
3. Conserve water.
4. Spread your laundry out over several days.
5. Plant only grass over the drainfield
6. Vehicles and structures should be kept off the drain field.
7. Keep runoff away from the drainfield.



Don't put these down the drain

- Kitchen grease or fat
- Disposable diapers
- Kitty litter
- Dental floss
- Sanitary products
- Cigarette butts
- Condoms
- Coffee grounds
- Paper towels, tissues
- Paint, paint thinners, solvents
- Pesticides
- Photographic chemicals
- Fuels or motor oil
- Septic tanks additives



If you have any other septic system questions, contact:

Fred Sorensen,
 Water Quality Coordinator
 University of Alaska Fairbanks,
 Cooperative Extension Service
 Phone: 907-786-6311
 Email: dffes@uaa.alaska.edu
www.uaf.edu/ces/water



or

Alaska Department of Conservation
 Division of Water,
 On-site Disposal Systems
 Phone: 907-262-5210
www.dec.state.ak.us/water/wwdp/onsite/onsite.htm

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Septic Systems and Ground Water



How your septic system can affect your drinking water



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