



SEPTIC TANK ADDITIVES

While there is no accepted test method to prove septic tank additives work or don't work, some products are actually harmful.

In Wisconsin, all additives must be reviewed by the Department of Safety & Professional Services prior to sale for proof they will not harm the user, bacterial action in the system, soil absorption or groundwater quality.

If you choose to use an additive, be sure the product has Department of Safety & Professional Services approval.

This brochure is intended to give a summary of Portage County's POWTS maintenance requirements.

Complete requirements can be found in the General Code of Ordinances for Portage County, Chapter 7.9.5, Maintenance Program, and in Chapter SPS 383, Wisconsin Administrative Code.

Chapter SPS 383 can be found at <http://dsps.wi.gov/Programs/Industry-Services/Industry-Services-Programs/Private-Onsite-Water-POWTS>.

To view Chapter 7.9.5 or find forms and contractor lists, please visit our website at the address below (look for Planning & Zoning Department" under the "Departments" tab).

What you should know about

Maintaining Your Private Sewage System



Tank Cover Locks

For health and safety reasons, tank access openings (called manholes) which extend above the ground surface must be kept covered and locked.

It is the property owner's responsibility to be sure that covers remain in place and locked or secured to prevent unauthorized access.

Pumpers must report missing locks and, if missing, the County will require replacement.



Portage County Planning & Zoning Department

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POWTS Maintenance requirements of the Portage County Private Sewage System Ordinance



Portage County has a mandatory Private Onsite Waste Treatment System (POWTS) maintenance program. If you own a property served by a POWTS, you are required to have your system maintained and submit maintenance reports to the county.

SEPTIC TANK MAINTENANCE

Most POWTS, other than holding tanks, will have a septic tank. Conventional, at-grade and mound systems all have septic tanks.

Required maintenance of these POWTS involves having the system visually inspected every 3 years and having tank(s) pumped if sludge and scum occupy more than 1/3 of the tank volume.

Inspection may be done by a licensed Master Plumber, Journeyman Plumber, POWTS Inspector, POWTS Maintainer or Certified Septage Servicing Operator (pumper).

Most POWTS installed after 2000 have effluent filters which need periodic cleaning and may require additional maintenance as specified in the management plan for the system. Management plans can be found in the sanitary permit record at the Planning & Zoning Department.

Proper maintenance will keep the system working properly and help extend it's life. Inspection will help identify potential problems with your system. Pumping the tank, inspecting the baffles, and cleaning the filter will help keep unwanted materials from flowing into and prematurely clogging the distribution cell(s).

PRE-TREATMENT COMPONENTS

Some systems include a pre-treatment component, such as an aerobic treatment unit (ATU), a sand filter, or a disinfection unit. These are designed to improve the quality of wastewater being discharged from the POWTS.

These components typically require frequent maintenance (often more than once a year) which must be performed by a certified POWTS Maintainer.

If your system includes a pre-treatment component, please contact the Planning & Zoning Department to review maintenance requirements.

MAINTENANCE REPORTING

A report must be submitted by a licensed professional to the Planning & Zoning Department within 30 days of maintaining or servicing any POWTS.

*If a required report is not received, the county will send a reminder that maintenance is due, along with a maintenance report form. **You have not satisfied code requirements until the county receives the maintenance report.***

SYSTEM CARE AND USE

In addition to mandatory maintenance program requirements, proper care and use of your system will help keep your POWTS functioning properly and extend it's life:

Limit the amount of water entering your system. Use water saving fixtures. Practice water conservation. Fix toilet float valves, leaks and dripping faucets.

Divert surface water drainage away from the system.

Do not connect footing drains or other "clear water" discharges to the system. Wastewater from laundry, sinks and showers is NOT clear water and MUST discharge to the system.

Do not flush or put materials down drains that may clog the system (fats, grease, coffee grounds, paper towels, sanitary napkins, condoms, diapers, kitty litter, etc.).

Do not flush or put toxic substances in drains that might damage the system or end up in the groundwater (cleaning fluids, medications, oils, paints, disinfectants, pesticides, mercury, etc.)

Use of chemicals or additives to clean or "sweeten" your system is not recommended. These products do not eliminate the need to pump or maintain your system. "Starters" are not necessary for new systems or after pumping existing systems. (see the Septic Tank Additives section of this brochure).

Do not park/store/or build anything on the drainfield.

Swimming pools need to be at least 15 feet from drainfield.

Routine mowing to reduce woody vegetation around the drainfield and septic tanks is beneficial.