



The Cruise

Cruising with RPC

2023 Newsletter
August
Baldwin Township

Total Permits Issued

This month: 73
Year to Date: 509

New Home Permits

Monthly Total: 1
Year to Date: 15
Monthly Valuation: \$388,732.00
Year to Date Valuation: \$5,687,979.00

All Commercial Permits

Monthly Total: 2
Year to Date: 24
Monthly Valuation: \$268,533.00
Year to Date Valuation: \$2,350,304.94



This edition's
FOCUS:

*septic
systems*

SAVE THE DATE!

SepticSmart Week 2023

September 18-22, 2023

**Get Ready For
SepticSmart Week!**

EPA's annual event, centered on encouraging homeowners and communities to care for and maintain their septic systems.

For more information, visit
www.epa.gov/septic



SepticSmart Week 2023: September 18-22, 2023

This year SepticSmart Week is celebrating its 11th Anniversary!

SepticSmart Week is an annual event that occurs the third week of September bringing attention to the importance of caring for and maintaining septic systems.



There are more than 618,000 Minnesota homes and businesses use septic systems. Properly installed and maintained systems are effective at treating waste and removing contaminants and pathogens from wastewater. Conversely, malfunctioning septic systems can pose a threat to both human health, if untreated waste comes to the surface, and groundwater, lakes, and streams. Harmful bacteria in many bodies of water around the state can be traced back to broken septic systems or improper sewage disposal.

Each year, the Minnesota cities, counties, and townships that administer installation permits and oversee septic system inspections report back to the MPCA on inspections conducted and permits issued. Visit the [Annual report page](#) to learn more about the number of permits issued, inspections conducted, and septic system professionals licensed and certified in 2022.

The MPCA had \$2 million available for grants to counties to assist low-income landowners with septic systems failing to protect groundwater or posing an imminent threat to public health or safety.

Maintain your system

Many septic system owners assume as long as their used water “goes away,” their system must be working properly. Septic systems must be designed specifically for your site’s conditions and installed correctly. Only regular maintenance and evaluation of the system can ensure that it is actually treating your sewage.

Septic system maintenance will increase system life. The MPCA suggests that septic tanks be evaluated at least every three years and pumped out when sludge and scum accumulate to the point of endangering the soil treatment system. For some homes, the accumulation can take many years; in other homes this process may take less than a year. The accumulation depends entirely on how the system is used. For example, routine garbage disposal use will increase accumulation of material in the tank. Septic tank additives are not an alternative to pumping the accumulated solids from the tank.

Manage your system

These operation and maintenance guidelines will prevent costly repairs or premature replacement of your septic system:



Household plumbing

- Conserve water, repair leaks and use low-flow fixtures.
- Spread water usage throughout the day and week. If you have periods of high use, talk to a septic professional about options that will help your system manage your lifestyle.
- Minimize use of harsh cleaners, bleach, antibacterial soaps and detergents.
- Do not dispose of paints, medications or chemicals through your septic system.
- Keep grease, lint, food, feminine hygiene products and plastics out.

Septic tank

- Pump solids through tank's maintenance hole regularly — at least every three years.
- Do not remove solids through inspection pipes.
- Install and insulate risers to maintenance hole for improved management access.
- Have baffles inspected when tank is pumped.
- Install an effluent screen and service as necessary.
- Do not use tank additives or cleaners.

Soil treatment area

- Maintain grass, native grasses or flowers over the treatment area. Mow, but do not fertilize, water or burn.
- Do not plant trees, shrubs or deep-rooted plants on or near the area.
- Do not grow vegetables or locate playgrounds above the area.
- Keep heavy vehicles off area (cars, tractors, snowmobiles, boats, etc.).

Hire a licensed professional to help you

The MPCA maintains a [list of professionals currently licensed by the state](#) to conduct this specialized work. Interview your septic system professional and learn about how they do business. Make sure they are they are licensed, reputable and reliable by asking for and checking references.

Additional resources

Since local ordinances can vary from the state code, always check with your local government (township, city or county) to determine the requirements in your area.

Don't let your septic system freeze



Cold temperatures are on the way. Don't let your septic system freeze. Here are some simple tips that can help you avoid costly problems with your septic system.

- Place a layer of mulch 8 to 12 inches thick over the pipes, tank, and soil treatment system to provide extra insulation. This can be straw, leaves, hay or other loose material that will stay in place and not become compacted. This is particularly important for new systems that were installed so late in the year that vegetative cover didn't get established. However, if the system is currently frozen, don't add mulch now; it will delay thawing in the spring.
- Use water — the warmer the better — if you're worried your system is starting to freeze. Spread out your laundry schedule so you run one warm/hot load a day. Use the dishwasher and take hot baths. Do not leave water running all the time—this will overload the septic system.
- Going away for an extended period? Have someone use warm water in the home regularly or pump out your tank before leaving.
- Fix any leaky plumbing fixtures or appliances in your home. This will help prevent freezing problems and help your system perform better all year.
- Keep all vehicle, animal, and people traffic off the system. This is a rule to follow all year as compacted snow and soils cause frost to go down deeper and faster. Pay special attention to the area between the house and tank.
- Keep an eye on your system. If any seeping or ponding occurs, contact an onsite professional to help determine the cause and remedy.
- Add more insulation to your system. This could include replacing pipe with insulated pipe, adding expanded foam panels over septic tanks, or adding more soil cover.

Source: MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency)

Septic system DO's and DON'Ts

A quick reference guide to extend the life of your septic system

A properly constructed and maintained system can last a long time if you follow some common septic system DO's and DON'Ts:

- Û DO conserve water and fix leaks quickly. Installing high efficiency appliances, such as washers and low-flow toilets, can extend the life of your system while leaky faucets can limit your system's capacity. If you have periods of high water use, talk to a septic professional about helping your system manage the spikes.
- Û DO have your septic tank routinely serviced as specified by a licensed professional.
- Û DO regularly check the condition of your septic system and any access covers. Unsecured or unsafe lids can be dangerous to children or pets; falling into a septic tank can be fatal.
- Û DO keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumping. You may wish to install septic tank risers to avoid having to disturb your lawn for every maintenance event.
- Û DO keep records of repairs, pumping, inspections, permits issued, and other SSTS maintenance activities.
- Û DO identify the location of your septic tank and drainfield. A sketch or map allows easier navigation to septic system components.
- Û DO divert water sources such as roof drains, house footing drains, and sump pumps away from the septic system— they shouldn't flow into the system or onto the ground over your system. Excessive water can cause back-ups and premature system failure.
- Û DO call a licensed professional if you experience problems with your system, or if there are any signs of system failure.

Û DON'T flush the following items:

- Lint or clothing fibers
- Diapers
- Cigarette butts
- Facial tissue
- Condoms
- Feminine hygiene products
- Unused medications
- Paint or solvents
- Flammable material
- Coffee grounds
- Cat litter
- Cooking oils and grease
- "Flushable" wipes or paper towels

These items will shorten the life of your system and may cause component failures or sewage backups. ONLY human waste and toilet paper should ever be flushed. Minimize use of harsh cleaners, bleach, and antibacterial soaps.

- Û DON'T drive over or park anything above the septic tank or drainfield. This can limit system life and cause damage.
- Û DON'T plant deep rooted plants over or near the drainfield. Roots from trees or shrubs may clog and damage drain lines. Plant grass or flowers instead (no vegetables), but don't fertilize, water, or burn them.
- Û DON'T dig in or build anything on top of your drainfield, particularly playgrounds.
- Û DON'T make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required local permits and professional assistance.
- Û DON'T enter your septic tank. Working in and around a septic tank is dangerous, and gases generated in the tank could be fatal.