



Individual Pump System Questions and Answers

from a Neighbor with 30 Years' Experience Having a Pump in Their Home

One of the properties within the affected neighborhood installed a pump system 30 years ago and has been running it without incident since then. We asked the property owner about their pump; their answers are below. *Minor edits and additions for clarity from District staff are shown with underlined text.*

1. **Q: How long has the pump been in place and functioning?**
A: Over 30 years
2. **Q: Have you experienced any issues since installing the pump (needs to rebuild or replace a pump)?**
A: Once over 20 years ago, the pump was upgraded to a larger one because the first pump was too small.
3. **Q: How often and how much maintenance has it required since installed? Do you do have any yearly preventative maintenance?**
A: Yes, we check it out under the house to make sure it's not clogged. We are very diligent about NOT throwing anything other than biodegradable toilet paper down the toilet.
4. **Q: What kind of maintenance is typically needed/encountered?**
A: Not much maintenance is needed. All we do to ensure it's working, we set a certain time for it to go off every day and listen for the faint humming sound when it turns back on. There have been no problems with it.
5. **Q: How have power outages affected its operation? And, how long can you use water during an outage before the holding tank fills up?**
A: There has been no problem with a power outage. When electricity comes back on, it resets itself. The sump is designed to hold about 3-days of light sewage use as a backup, and the pump has battery backup.
6. **Q: Do you have a backup generator to power the pump during an outage?**
A: We have found no need for a backup generator. However, we have one but haven't needed to use it.
7. **Q: How has having the pump affected your monthly electric bill?**
A: Don't realize any additional cost. However, I'm sure there has to be, but it's minimal.
8. **Q: When you installed the pump, did you need to make any upgrades to your electric panel and/or add any circuits?**
A: We didn't, but that would be whatever additions your system would need.
9. **Q: Are there any odors associated with the system?**
A: A little smell inside the pump room under the house when the system is churning the waste disposal, but not within the house.
10. **Q: How and where do you vent the sump?**
A: For ventilation within the pump room itself, we have a large cement cellar with a door, of course, and windows. For venting the pump and sump, a pipe vents outside.
11. **Q: Have you had any issues with the lateral (pressurized pipe between pump and sewer main pipeline)?**
A: No, never.
12. **Q: Can you hear the pump while inside your home? Does its operation interrupt your daily lives?**
A: No daily interruption
13. **Q: Do you have any alarms on the pump system, and if so, how often do they go off? (examples: pump fail, high water alarm, power outage, etc.)**
A: Yes, we have an alarm on all of the system. Only has gone off a couple of times in 25 years when the power went out.
14. **Q: Are you more mindful about what gets flushed down the toilet, such as wipes, dental floss, or feminine products, etc.?**
A: Yes, you have to be prudent in maintaining your system. None of the above except biodegradable toilet paper.
15. **Q: Overall, are you glad you installed the pump? Were there any options to avoid installing the pump?**
A: We didn't see any other option. Very happy with the system that was installed.
16. **Q: What does it cost to maintain and operate the pump.**
A: The cost for electricity at PG&E's average peak rate of \$0.34/kwh would be about \$60 per year or about \$5 per month. Manufacturers recommend an annual inspection by a plumber and claim that typical pumps last 20 to 30 years before requiring replacement. Local plumbers tell us that a yearly inspection and maintenance would cost about \$300 to \$500.