

Hendricks County Health Department



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Public Health
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HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES HOMEOWNERS TO MAINTAIN THEIR SEPTIC SYSTEMS

High seasonal water table can cause malfunctions for systems

HENDRICKS COUNTY – Spring is finally here, and public health officials want to remind residents with septic systems to take steps to protect and maintain their system.

“Septic systems that are properly designed, installed, and maintained can provide excellent wastewater treatment,” says Ginger Harrington, Environmental Health Team Lead at the Hendricks County Health Department. “It is cheaper to maintain a septic system than to replace it.”

A septic system filters disease-causing bacteria and viruses out of household wastewater from toilets, sinks, bathtubs, washers, and other wastewater sources. When it is well-maintained and working properly, it keeps residents and the community safe from groundwater and surface water contamination, which can spread disease in humans and animals if they drink, cook, play in, or use the water for any reason.

Harrington recommends that all septic tanks be pumped by a licensed waste hauler every three to five years. She also recommends diverting downspout drains and sump pump drains away from the septic field. Installing high-efficiency toilets, shower heads, and clothes washers can also help prevent overloading septic systems with wastewater.

“A typical single-family home produces nearly 70 gallons of wastewater per individual per day. A leaky toilet can add another 200 gallons of water per day,” says Harrington. “Conserving water and doing laundry throughout the week instead of just on one day can prolong the life of your septic system and help prevent failure.”

Residents should remember that only human waste and toilet paper should be flushed in a toilet. Flushing other items can cause the system to fail and contaminate groundwater and surface water.

“Toilets are not trash cans, so never flush items such as paper towels, feminine hygiene products, or diapers and wipes down the toilet,” states Julie Haan, Director of Environmental Health at the Health Department. “Also, never dump household chemicals, food debris, cat litter, or cigarette butts down drains as they can cause system failure, too.”

In Hendricks County, about 35% of houses have a septic system, and the spring months are when septic systems are more likely to malfunction due to high seasonal water tables. A foul odor is not always the first sign of a malfunctioning septic system, so residents should call a septic professional if they notice any of the following:

- Wastewater backing up into household drains or draining slowing.
- Bright green, spongy grass over the area where a septic system is installed, even during dry weather.
- Pooling water or muddy soil around the septic system.
- A strong odor around where the septic system is installed.

“We all benefit from a safe and healthy environment, so we appreciate the efforts of septic system owners to do their part to keep Hendricks County’s surface and groundwater free from dangerous wastewater contamination,” says Haan.

For more information about septic system maintenance and repair in Hendricks County, contact the Hendricks County Health Department at (317) 745-9217.