

Septic System Back Up or Alarm

What to do if your septic system starts backing up. Follow these steps to make sure you address the problem!



1. Stop Running Water

The first thing to do when your septic system starts backing up is stop running water.

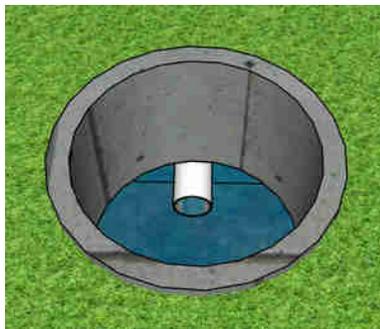
Most people forget that when sewage starts flowing into their home it's because the water they are using does not have anywhere to go, stop running water and the flow of sewage will stop!

Avoid using the restroom, shower, running dishes, laundry, etc. until the problem with your septic system is resolved. You will have to go to a neighbor's home or local recreation center to use the shower or restroom.

If your septic system has an alarm - there will be a "silence" switch on the alarm box. Once switched, the light will continue to flash but sound will stop. Stop running water and call a waste-water professional.

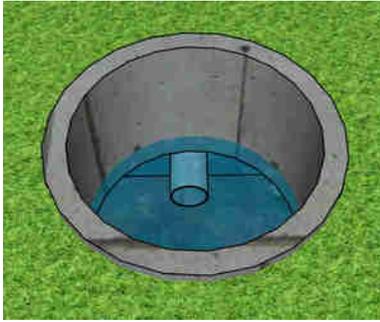
2. Check the Water Level in Your Septic Tanks

You now need to determine where the problem is coming from. It may not be an issue with your septic system at all, but with the piping between the house and the tank could be clogged. To do this, the level of water in your septic tank needs to be inspected. We recommend calling a waste-water professional to do this for you, since accessing your tank can involve potential hazards. If you would like to inspect it yourself, be aware that tank lids can be heavy or require special tools to open. Never climb into a tank or lower your head below ground level when inspecting your tank.



Normal Operation Level: A "full" septic tank is hard to define. Normal operating level will look like the picture to the left. There should be no water in the "riser" coming to the surface.

If your septic system is backing up, but your septic tank has a normal operating level like the one shown, you should have your sewer line from the house to the tank inspected for damage or clogs. While John Todd Co. does not "snake" or clean lines, we have trusted companies that we would refer you to. We do offer sewer line scoping as a service, which is a camera small enough to enter your pipes and inspect the trouble areas.



Overfull Level: If you open the lids to your septic tank and see water coming into the riser, like in the picture to the right, then you have an issue with your septic system and you should have your septic tank pumped.

Make sure that whoever pumps your septic tank watches for any back flow from the the soil treatment area (for gravity systems). You will notice water pouring back into the tank from the leach field for an abnormal amount of time, this can indicate a failed leach field. John Todd Co. does offer septic tank pumping as a service, and even offers an after hours emergency pumping service.

If you have your tank pumped, you will need to "flush out" the pipes between your house and your tank! Turn on all of your sinks and showers/tubs with hot water, and flush a toilet two to three times. Leave the sinks running for about 5-10 minutes. This pushes anything that may have gotten stuck in the pipes between your tank and your house during the back up.

3. Follow Up with Repairs

Clearing out your pipes and having your septic tank pumped are only a temporary fix. Make sure you follow up with any repairs that are recommended. If your sewer line is clogged, it could be due to damaged or warped pipe that needs to be replaced. If your leach field isn't accepting water then you will need to have a new leach field designed.