



**Homeowner Tips for ALL (P)ivate (O)nsite (W)astewater (T)reatment (S)ystems whether conventional, sand filters, mounds, aerobic, or Multi-Flo.**

There are a number of do's and don'ts that will help ensure a long life and minimal maintenance for onsite systems. As a general rule, nothing should be disposed into any wastewater system that hasn't first been ingested, other than toilet tissue, mild detergents and wash water. Here are some additional guidelines:

**Inside the House**

**Don't** flush dangerous and damaging substances into the POWTS tank. (Please refer to "Substitutes for Household Hazardous Waste," below) Specifically, do not flush . . .

- Flammable or toxic products
- Household cleaners, especially floor wax and rug cleaners
- Chlorine, chlorides, and pool or spa products

**Don't** flush substances that cause maintenance problems and/or increase the need for septage pumping. Dispose of the following with your trash:

- Kitty litter, coffee grounds, tea bags, egg shells, cigarette butts
- Paper towels, newspapers, sanitary napkins, diapers
- Cooking grease, bath or body oils
- Rags, large amounts of hair
- Water softener backwash

**Don't** use garbage disposals excessively. They increase the amount of solids entering your tank. Compost scraps or dispose with your trash. Collect grease in a container and dispose with your trash. (These food byproducts or cooking products accelerate the need for septage pumping and increase maintenance.)

**Don't** use special additives that are touted to enhance the performance of your tank or system. Additives can cause major damage to your absorption field and other areas in the collection system. The natural microorganisms that grow in your system generate their own enzymes that are sufficient for breaking down and digesting nutrients in the wastewater.

**Don't** use excessive amounts of water (50 gallons per person per day is typical).

**Don't** leave interior faucets on to protect water lines during cold spells. A running faucet can easily increase your wastewater flow by 1,000 to 3,000 gallons per day and hydraulically overload your absorption field. Instead, properly insulate or heat your faucets and plumbing.

**Do** repair leaky plumbing fixtures. (A leaky toilet can waste up to 2,000 gallons of water in a single day - that's 10-20 times more water than a household's typical daily usage)



**Do** conserve water:

- Take shorter showers or baths with a partially filled tub.
- Don't let water run unnecessarily while washing hands, food, teeth, dishes, etc.
- Wash dishes and clothes when you have a full load.
- When possible avoid doing several loads in one day, unless your system is time dosed.
- Use water saving devices on faucets and showerheads.
- When replacing old toilets, buy a low-flush model.

**Do** keep lint out of your POWTS system by cleaning the lint filters on your washing machine and dryer before every load. Installing a supplemental lint filter on your washing machine would be a good precautionary measure. (This normally takes just a few minutes. Lint and other such materials can make an extreme difference in the frequency and cost of pumping out your POWTS tank.)

**Do** use substitutes for household hazardous waste. Replace the following hazardous products with one that is less environmentally harmful. The hazardous cleaners are italicized, followed by the suggested substitute.

*Ammonia-based cleaners:* Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge. For windows, use a solution of 2 Tbs. white vinegar to 1 qt. water. Place the mixture into the spray bottle.

*Disinfectants:* Use borax: 1/2 cup in a gallon of water; deodorizes also. Oxygen bleach (ChloroxII or Oxiclean®) will also disinfect and sanitize 1 tablespoon/gallon of water.

*Drain decloggers:* Use a plunger or metal snake, or remove and clean trap.

*Scouring cleaners & powers:* Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge or add 4 Tbs. baking soda to 1 qt. warm water or use Bon Ami. It's cheaper and won't scratch.

*Carpet/upholstery cleaners:* Sprinkle dry cornstarch or baking soda on, then vacuum. For tougher stains, blot with white vinegar in soapy water. Use **Oxiclean** for stains of an organic nature.

*Toilet cleaners:* Sprinkle on baking soda or Bon Ami, then scrub with a toilet brush.

*Furniture/floor polishes:* To clean, use oil soap and warm water. Dry with soft cloth. Polish with 1 part lemon juice and 2 parts oil (any kind), or use natural products with lemon oil or beeswax in mineral oil.

*Metal cleaners:* Brass and copper: scrub with a used half of lemon dipped in salt. Stainless steel: use scouring pad and soapy water. Silver: rub gently with toothpaste and soft wet cloth.

*Oven cleaners:* Quickly sprinkle salt on drips, then scrub. Use baking soda and scouring pads on older spills.

*Laundry Detergents:* Choose one with a zero phosphate content or use soap flakes with 1/3 cup of washing soda. (Before switching, wash clothes in pure washing soda to remove residues.) We have had excellent results with products produced by "**Seventh Generation**" that produce for laundry, toilets, dishes and general cleaning. They are environmentally safe and can be found on the internet at [www.seventhgen.com](http://www.seventhgen.com)



## **Outside the House**

**Do** familiarize yourself with the location of your POWTS system and electrical control panel.

**Do** make arrangements with a licensed and authorized service person to provide regular monitoring and maintenance.

**Do** keep accurate records of maintenance and service calls. Make sure whoever services your tank keeps a complete record, and ask for a copy for your records.

**Do** locate your electrical control panel where it will be protected from potential vandalism.

**Do** keep an "as built" system diagram in a safe place for reference.

**Don't** dig without knowing the location of your POWTS system. As much as possible, plan landscaping and permanent outdoor structures before installation. But easily removable items, such as bird baths and picnic tables, are OK to place on top of your system.

**Don't** drive over your tank or any buried components in your system, unless it's been equipped with a special traffic lid. If the system is subject to possible traffic, put up a barricade or a row of shrubs.

**Don't** dump RV waste into your POWTS. It will increase the frequency of required septage pumping. When dumped directly into the pumping vault, RV waste clogs or fouls equipment causing undue maintenance and repair costs. (Some RV waste may contain chemicals that are toxic or that may retard the biological digestion occurring within the tank.)

**Don't** enter your trash trap. Any work to the tank should be done from the outside. Gases that can be generated in the tank and/or oxygen depletion can be fatal.

**Don't** ever connect rain gutters or storm drains to the sewer or allow surface water to drain into it. The additional water will increase costs, reduce the capacity of the collection and treatment systems, and flood the absorption field.

### **At the Control Panel Important! Caution!**

**Don't** turn "off" the main circuit breaker to the wastewater pumps when going on vacation. If there is any filtration or inflow into the system, the pumps will need to handle it.

**Do** familiarize yourself with the location of your POWTS system and electrical control panel and note the number on the panel. Refer to this number when reporting a malfunction in the system.

**Do** take immediate action to correct the problem in the event of an alarm condition. Call your system operator or Maintenance Company whenever the alarm comes on, there is an audible and visual alert. (It's wise to make the call immediately to avoid the tendency to forget.)

**Do** remember that the audible alarm can be silenced by pushing the silence button on the front of the electrical control panel or alarm box. With minimal use, the tank has a reserve storage capacity good for 24-48 hours.

Additional Benefits: Besides improving the performance and longevity of your system, following these best practice suggestions will conserve energy and water usage. Your system should function for decades with minimal maintenance other than periodic inspections.