HOMEOWNER'S MANUAL

For the City of Coburg, Oregon

How to Take Care of Your Wastewater System

Your home is connected to the City of Coburg's wastewater collection system. That means a pump system filters and pumps effluent from a septic tank in your yard to a STEP (Septic Tank Effluent Pumping) sewer.

The wastewater components on your property — including a tank, an Orenco® pump system (pump vault, effluent filter, pump, and control panel), and a connection to the collection system are inspected, serviced, and maintained by Coburg Public Works. A public easement on your property provides the City with access for wastewater system maintenance.

Your system will work better and last longer if you learn what can go into it – and what can't. As a general rule, nothing should go down the drain that hasn't first been ingested, other than toilet paper, mild detergents, and wash water. (This is true for all sewer systems, gravity sewers as well as STEP sewers.)

This booklet explains the do's and don'ts of your wastewater system. Please read this booklet and explain this information to your family and guests. And please call Coburg Public Works if you have any questions. With proper care, our wastewater system will last for decades!

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Emergency Phone Number: **(541) 683-0081**

Do's and Don'ts for INSIDE the House

Don't flush dangerous and damaging substances into your wastewater treatment system. (Please refer to the "Substitutes for Household Hazardous Waste," on the next page.) Specifically, do not flush . . .

- Pharmaceuticals
- Excessive amounts of bath or body oils
- Flammable or toxic products
- Household cleaners, especially floor wax and rug cleaners
- Chlorine bleach, chlorides, and pool or spa products
- Pesticides, herbicides, agricultural chemicals, or fertilizers

Don't use special additives that are touted to enhance the performance of your tank. Additives can cause major damage to 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.

Do collect grease in a container and dispose of it with your trash. And avoid using garbage disposals excessively. Compost scraps or dispose of them in the trash. Food by-products accelerate the need for septage pumping and increase maintenance.

Do keep lint out of your wastewater treatment 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 a big difference in the frequency and cost of pumping out the tank.)

Do use your trash can to dispose of substances that cause maintenance problems and/or increase the need for septage pumping.

Dispose of the following with your trash:

- Egg shells, cantaloupe seeds, gum, coffee grounds
- Tea bags, chewing tobacco, cigarette butts
- Dental floss, sanitary napkins, diapers, disposable latex products
- Paper towels, newspapers, candy wrappers
- Rags, large amounts of hair
- "Flushable" wipes, baby wipes, medicated wipes, cleaning wipes

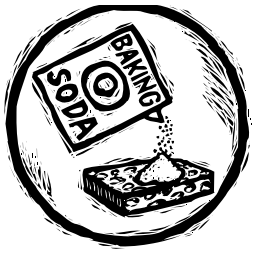
Do's and Don'ts for INSIDE the House

Don't ignore leaky plumbing fixtures; repair them. A leaky toilet can waste up to 2,000 gallons (7500 liters) of water in a single day. That's 10-20 times more water than a household's typical daily usage. Leaky plumbing fixtures increase your water bill, waste natural resources, and overload your system.

Don't use excessive amounts of water. Using 50 gallons (200 liters) per person per day is typical. If your household does not practice any of the "water conserving tips" below, you may be using too much water.

Do conserve water:

- Take shorter showers or take baths with a partially filled tub. Be cautious about excessive use of large soaking tubs.
- Don't let water run unnecessarily while brushing teeth or washing hands, food, dishes, etc.
- Wash dishes and clothes when you have a full load.
- When possible, avoid doing several loads in one day.
- Use water-saving devices on faucets and showerheads.
- When replacing old toilets, buy low-flush models.



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

Ammonia-based cleaners:
For surfaces, sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge. For windows, use a solution of 2 tbs (30 mL) white vinegar to 1 qt (1 L) water. Pour the mixture into a spray bottle.

Carpet/upholstery cleaners:
Sprinkle dry cornstarch or baking soda on, then vacuum. For tougher stains, blot with white vinegar in soapy water.

Disinfectants:
Use borax: ½ cup (100 g) in a gallon (4 L) of water; deodorizes also.

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

Scouring cleaners & powders:
Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge or add 4 tbs (50 g) baking soda to 1 qt (1 L) warm water. Or use Bon Ami® cleanser; it's cheaper and won't scratch.

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

Laundry detergents:
Choose a liquid detergent (not a powder) that doesn't have chlorine or phosphates.

Metal cleaners:
To polish silver, rub gently with toothpaste and soft wet cloth. To clean and polish brass and copper, scrub with half of a lemon dipped in salt. To clean stainless steel, use a scouring pad and soapy water.

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

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

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Do's and Don'ts for OUTSIDE the House

Don't enter your tank, ever! Gases that can be generated in the tank and/or oxygen depletion can be fatal.

Do keep the green tank access lids secured to the riser at all times with stainless steel lid bolts. If bolts are lost or damaged, call Coburg Public Works immediately for replacement: 541-683-0081. If a tank access lid becomes detached from the riser or if the lid or riser becomes damaged, BLOCK ACCESS TO THE TANK OPENING IMMEDIATELY AND KEEP CHILDREN AWAY until all repairs are made.

Don't dig without knowing the location of your wastewater system. Call the Utility Notification Center first: (800) 332-2344 or 811.

Don't build over or within five feet of your septic tank or the green tank access lids. This includes decks and paving. Also, keep the area around the septic tank and the green tank access lids clear of pavers, planters, large rocks, and other landscaping features. The City needs to access the tank and lids for service and maintenance. Inspections are scheduled every two years. Obstructions will be removed at your expense.

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 wastewater system. It will increase the frequency of required septage pumping. When dumped directly into the pump vault, RV waste clogs or fouls equipment, causing undue maintenance and repair costs. (Also, some RV waste may contain chemicals that are toxic or that may inhibit the biological digestion occurring within the tank.)

Don't ever connect rain gutters or storm drains to the tank or allow surface water to drain into it. And don't discharge hot-tub water or pool water into your system. The additional water will increase costs and reduce the capacity of the collection and treatment system. It can also wash excess solids through the tank.

At the Control Panel

Don't try to open your control panel or perform work on your panel for any reason! In the event of an alarm or other problem with the control panel or the system, call Coburg Public Works immediately: (541) 683-0081. Service is available 24 hours a day.

Do remember you can silence the audible alarm (it sounds like a smoke alarm) by pushing the lighted button directly above the "Push to Silence" label on the front of the electrical control panel until the alarm goes off. With normal use, the tank has a reserve storage capacity good for about 24 hours.

(And also remember that silencing the alarm won't fix the problem, so be sure to call Coburg Public Works immediately.)

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

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541-682-7857 (General inquiries) • 541-682-7850 (Utility billing) • 541-682-7871 (City Administrator)