

# VILLAGE OF EAST HILLS

INCORPORATED JUNE 24, 1931

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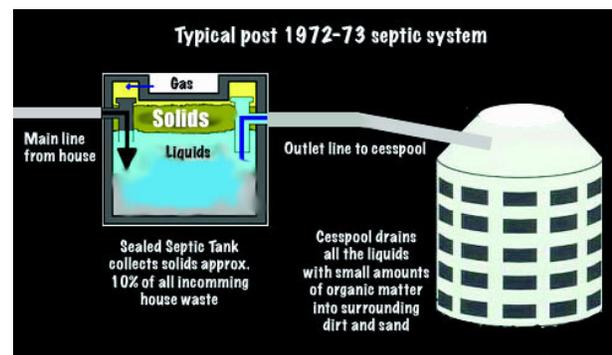
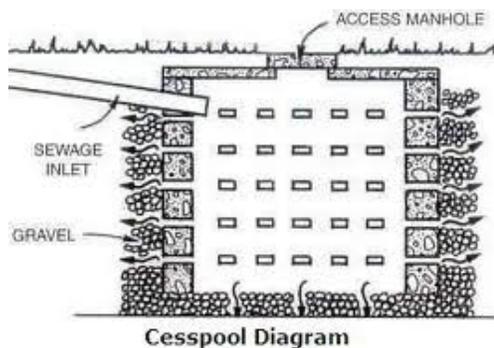
## Septic System Information

With very few exceptions, all homes in East Hills rely on on-site sanitary systems. Unlike municipal sewer systems which collect waste from each property for treatment at a centralized location, on-site systems are owned and maintained by individual property owners. Proper care and maintenance is essential to ensure that these systems continue to function as designed. Over the long run, proper maintenance and periodic inspections are cost effective and can prevent significant property damage due to clogs, backups, floods and structural failure.

### Types of Systems

**Cesspools** – A cesspool is an underground tank that is designed to collect sewage from the house and allow the liquid portion to leach into the soil. Beneficial bacteria will break down solids to some extent, but they then settle to the bottom of the cesspool and remain until it is pumped out. Cesspools provide minimal treatment prior to returning liquids back into the groundwater and solids tend to clog the pores in the soil gradually slowing the rate at which liquid can be discharged into the soil.

**Septic System** – A septic system is a two tank system that collects sewage in a solid, watertight tank prior to releasing the liquid into a leaching pool (physically identical to a cesspool). When the sewage enters the septic tank, solids settle out to the bottom and grease and oil float to the top. Liquids then flow into the leaching pool. In a properly functioning system, the liquid is nearly free of solids and oils, greatly increasing the function of the leaching pool. Because sewage remains in the septic tank for days, weeks or months, the sewage treatment prior to discharge is superior to that of a cesspool.



### Construction

**Precast Concrete** – Most systems installed in East Hills after 1955 are constructed of pre-cast concrete. Pre-cast structures are generally very solid and safe.

**Concrete or Cesspool Block** – Most systems installed in East Hills prior to 1950 were constructed by configuring individual blocks in a circle at the bottom of an excavated hole and stacking additional layers in ever decreasing circles until the desired height is reached. The excavation is then backfilled around the new structure keeping the blocks in place. If constructed properly these cesspools were generally safe for their designed life expectancy, which was approximately 30 years. Unfortunately, the structures are now at least 55 years old and collapses in East Hills are common. We consider these structures **potentially hazardous** and strongly recommend replacement. Block structures are very common south of Harbor Hill Rd.



**Table 4-24. Suggested Septic Tank Pumping Frequency (Years)**  
(Cooperative Extension Service - University of Maryland, 1991)

Tank Size (gal)	Household Size (number of people)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
500	5.8	2.6	1.5	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	-
750	9.1	4.2	2.6	1.8	1.3	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.3
1,000	12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.7
1,250	15.6	7.5	4.8	3.4	2.6	2.0	1.7	1.4	1.2	1.0
1,500	18.9	9.1	5.9	4.2	3.3	2.6	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.3
1,750	22.1	10.7	6.9	5.0	3.9	3.1	2.6	2.2	1.9	1.6
2,000	25.4	12.4	8.0	5.9	4.5	3.7	3.1	2.6	2.2	2.0
2,250	28.6	14.0	9.1	6.7	5.2	4.2	3.5	3.0	2.6	2.3
2,500	31.9	15.6	10.2	7.5	5.9	4.8	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.6

## Maintenance

**What Not To Flush** – Septic systems are designed to break down limited amounts of organic waste. Grease, disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, condoms, paper towels, garbage disposal waste, plastics, cat litter, paint, pesticides, drain opener or other hazardous chemicals as well as large quantities of bleach, household cleaners or detergents can interfere with the physical and/or biological function of your system.

**Pumping and Inspection** – Periodic pumping and inspection is essential to maintaining a properly functioning septic system or cesspool. Waiting until your system backs up into your basement causes damage to your home, adversely affects the life span of your system and increases the cost to pump your system. The chart above can guide you in determining the proper frequency for maintenance pumping of a modern septic system. In a properly maintained septic system, only the septic tank will need to be pumped. Cesspools vary greatly in size and function, but pumping at the frequency indicated for a 1500 – 2000 gallon septic tank in the above chart is likely to be a good starting point.

**Additives** – Biological additives are unnecessary and acids and cleaners may be harmful to system components, kill beneficial bacteria or impair the function of the surrounding soil – don't use them.

## Replacement

**Requirements** – On-site sanitary systems have a finite life span. Eventually the soil surrounding the system will clog and stop returning liquid into the ground and it will need to be replaced. The new installation will be required to meet State and County standards. Generally, a 1500 gallon septic tank and an 8'x12' or 10'x10' leaching pool meets the requirements of any house in East Hills. Smaller systems may require further information and design by a professional engineer. At the time of installation, all block structures *must* be filled in and properly abandoned. A permit is required.

**Installation** – In order to function properly, leaching pools must be installed in sandy soil that is capable of allowing liquids to leach back into the ground. In some areas of East Hills, sandy soil is easily reached at depths normally required to install the system (18'-20'). In other areas, it may be necessary to use a crane to excavate to depths up to 90' to reach suitable soil. The excavation is then backfilled with sand prior to installing the leaching pool. This will add to the cost of installation and deeper depths can add considerably. Installation of a new system involves digging up large areas of your yard and may involve considerable damage to landscaping, walkways and driveways. Ensuring that your system is properly sized and installed will save money in the long run will require less frequent maintenance and will last for many decades to come.

**Oversight** – Installations require permits and must be inspected by the East Hills Building Department. An inspector will inspect the work several times over the course of the day to help ensure your new system is properly installed and will last for decades to come.