

PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PROPERTY

AFTER THE FLOOD

YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

What steps should I take if my septic system is flooded?

- Systems should not be used while the drain field or tanks are covered with water. Resume system use once the water in the septic drain field is below the distribution pipes.
- If the system must be used, conserve as much water as possible while the system restores itself as groundwater levels drop.
- Flood water may be contaminated with sewage. Protect yourself by wearing protective equipment such as gloves, protective eyewear, a face mask and rubber boots. Be sure to wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Do not pump your septic tank. Pumping out a septic tank that is sitting in saturated soil may cause it to “pop out” of the ground.
- Avoid using heavy machinery near the saturated septic systems, as they are especially vulnerable to damage under these conditions.
- If sewage has backed up into a basement, clean the area and disinfect the floor. Use a chlorine solution of a half cup of chlorine bleach to a gallon of water when mopping the floor.
- If you have a groundwater well, do not drink the water until water testing proves it to be safe for consumption.

What steps should I take if my system has a pump?

- Do not operate pumps until floodwaters recede and the groundwater table is below the pump chamber bottom/floor.
- Avoid contact with electric pumps or equipment, which may have been submerged during the flood.
- What steps should I take if I have an Advanced Treatment Unit (E.g. Ecoflo, Waterloo Biofilter, Puraflo)?
- The system should not be used until the maintenance provider or licensed septic installer has verified system operation.
- Do not pump treatment tanks until floodwaters recede and groundwater table is below the bottom/floor of the treatment tank.

What should I do if I'm having septic problems after the floodwaters recede?

- Do not pump septic tanks until water levels recede below the bottom/floor of the tank.
- Have septic tanks professionally inspected. Signs of damage include visible settling of the ground above the tank, or an inability of the system to accept additional water.
- Have your tanks cleaned and/or repaired by a licensed septic installer.

What should I do with my outhouse?

Ensure the outhouse is positioned over the pit. If the outhouse has been washed away or collapsed, cover the open pit with sturdy boards to prevent accidents and the spread of disease. If water is in the pit, add two litres of unscented liquid chlorine bleach every three to four days until the water disappears.

When to contact the sewage system approval agency?

Contact your local septic system Approval Agency for any repair or replacement of your sewage system. No permit is required for replacing electrical components such as pumps, control panels, etc. Your local municipality can direct you to the appropriate contact.

