

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

What is a Septic System?

Septic systems are wastewater treatment units commonly found in rural areas where municipal sewers are not available.

Common onsite sewage systems	Characteristics of System	How to prepare for your inspection
Class 1: Privy, Outhouse	Portable privy, outhouse over gravel pit.	Ensure structure is vermin-proof and that pit is not exposed at grade.
Class 2: Greywater systems	Greywater gravel pit, does not receive sanitary waste.	Ensure that there are no illegal discharges from the system and the system does not receive sanitary waste.
Class 4: Septic Tank and Leaching Bed	Sewage effluent goes from a septic tank to a tile bed or filter bed (i.e. weepers/runs). Tank is typically pumped every 3-5 years to remove accumulated solids.	Expose septic tank lid(s). Most tanks have two (2) chambers and both have an access lid. Expose both prior to inspection.
Class 4: with Advanced Treatment Unit	Similar to a standard Class 4 with additional treatment tank(s) serviced annually; will often include blowers/aeration.	Have a current Treatment Unit Servicing Agreement ready for the inspection.
Class 5: Holding Tank	Tank is pumped frequently (every few weeks) or before it fills. There is no discharge to the environment.	Attain haulage agreement with local contractor and have a copy onsite. Ensure tank is equipped with a high level alarm.

Class 3 (Cesspool) systems will also be inspected if encountered, however it is noted that Cesspools are uncommon in Ontario.

Why inspect septic systems?

Septic systems that have not been maintained or were poorly installed can pose a human health and environmental risk. Inspections can help identify current or potential future problems with the system. This helps ensure the system has a long and useful life as well as being proactive with respect to environmental/lake water protection.

What if I have an Advanced Treatment Unit?

Servicing of advanced treatment units is specific to the treatment unit itself and does not typically include a review of the other components of the system. WSP will therefore be required to complete a re-inspection at these properties to ensure all other maintenance requirements are being met. A current Treatment Unit Servicing Agreement must be presented to WSP during the inspection. Examples of advanced treatment unit manufacturers include: Waterloo Biofilter, Norweco, Aquarobic, MicroFAST, EcoFlow, BioNest, etc. WSP will not inspect the Treatment Unit itself.

Do I have to expose the lids to my tank?

Yes, Class 4 tanks commonly have two (2) tank lids and both must be exposed. If they are buried under grass or a garden then the earth must be removed above the lid(s) and a perimeter large enough for the inspector to use a crowbar to shift or lift the lid(s) off. If the lid(s) are under a deck then there must be a hatch installed or planks removed to allow the inspector vertical space above the lids to complete the inspection fully. If an access port for a holding tank is accessible but the tank lids are under a permanent structure such as a driveway or building then the access port may be suitable for the inspection.

What if I don't know what type of system I have or where the lid(s) are located?

Contacting the Township of Algonquin Highlands for permit details is one method for determining what system is present. A local pumper can also help determine what system is present and where the lid(s) are located.

Do I have to pump the tank before the inspection?

No, WSP does not require the septic tank to be pumped prior to the inspection.

What if I have an old system that we no longer use, such as an outhouse?

All Classes of septic systems must be inspected if they are still in a state that could possibly be used; this can include an old outhouse or tank that still has plumbing connecting the system to the building and is not decommissioned by filling the tank with stones, gravel or concrete.

Do I have to be at my property during my inspection time?

Yes, an owner or a representative over the age of 18 must be present during the inspection time. This will aid in the inspection process and allow the inspector to provide information about the system such as maintenance requirements.