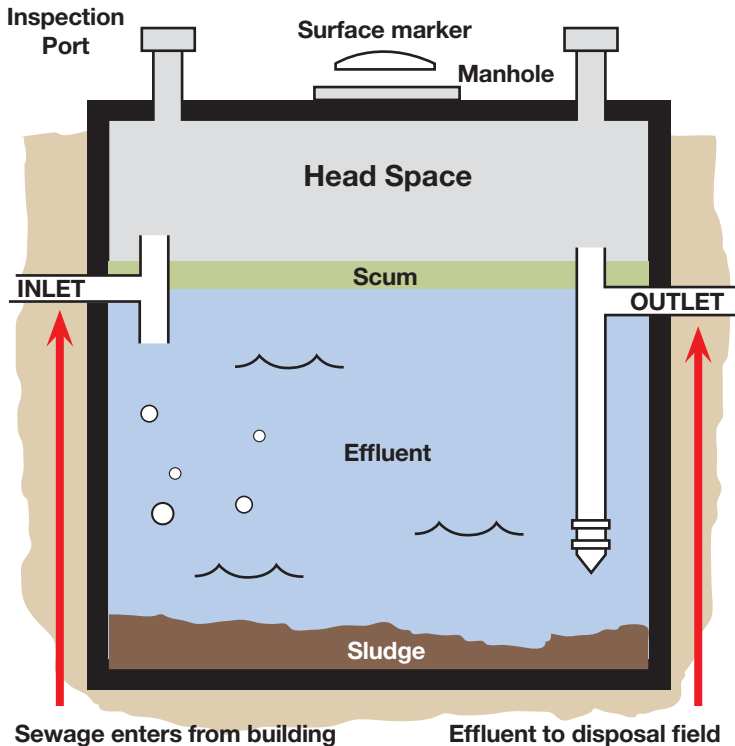


Septic System Information

What is a Septic Tank?

The diagram below is a simple illustration of how a septic tank works to treat all household wastewater.

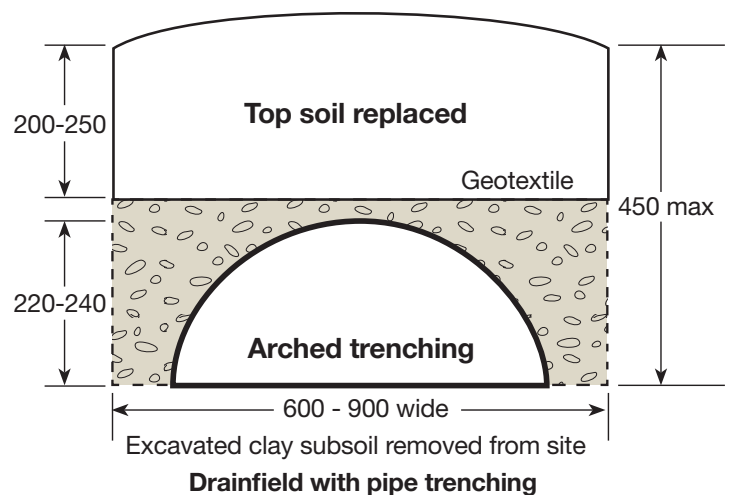
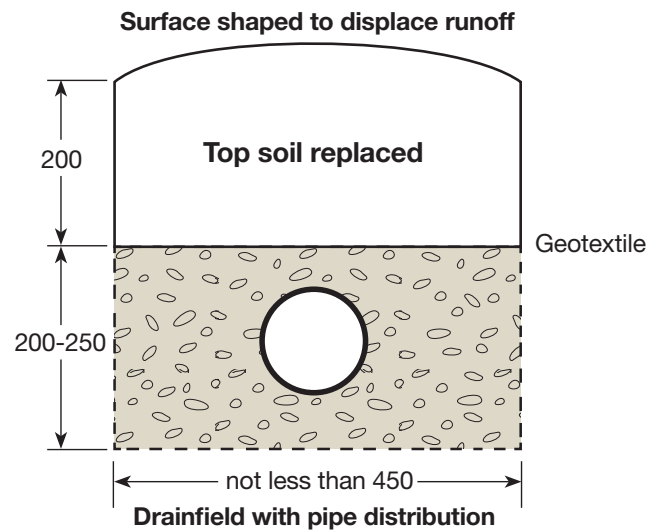


1. The sludge is the solid component of the wastewater which sinks, while the scum layer is mostly fats and oils which float to the top.
2. The scum layer helps to block oxygen from the effluent in between these layers, which allows bacteria to partially treat the water.
3. The effluent then exits the tank to the absorption trench via the outlet when fresh wastewater enters from the house

How does the absorption trench work?

1. The trenches work by slowly releasing the partially treated wastewater into the soil through perforated pipes.

2. These pipes are surrounded by some form of aggregate, usually rock and sand. This creates more surface area to help filter the wastewater before it reaches the soil, where it slowly evaporates and nutrients are taken up by vegetation on the ground surface.
3. The diagrams below represent how most trenches are constructed. The arched trenching is commonly used for newly constructed trenches.



Complete a Regular Self Inspection of your Septic System

- ❶ Learn the location and lay out of the septic tank and absorption trench system.
- ❷ Look inside the tank, you should be able to see the inlet and outlet pipes. If you can't the tank is too full and needs pumping out by a licensed contractor. An over full septic tank can indicate that there are blockages in the drainage system.
- ❸ Check the tank for any gaps or cracks that might need to be sealed.
- ❹ Walk across the absorption trench area to make sure it's not wet or odorous. It should be dry with no soggy areas and no effluent smell.
- ❺ Make sure that all of your pipes in the house are draining well and there isn't any wastewater backwashing into your sinks or toilet.

Looking after your Septic System

- ✓ Learn how your septic tank and absorption trenches work and understand it's maintenance requirements.
- ✓ Keep your trenches mowed short. Don't plant large trees or shrubs near your tank or over your trench area.
- ✓ Have a licensed contractor pump your tank out every 3-5 years.
- ✓ Conserve water so your system is not over loaded and it has time to sufficiently treat the wastewater.
- ✓ Use environmentally friendly biodegradable cleaning products so bacteria is kept alive in your tank. The bacteria is essential for treating your wastewater.
- ✗ Keep livestock and cars off your trench area so it doesn't become compacted and collapse.
- ✗ Don't flush foreign material down your sinks and toilets. Items such as nappies, makeup wipes, and cotton ear buds will clog the pipes and cause your system to stop working properly. Put them in the garbage bin instead of your septic system.
- ✗ Excessive amounts of fats, oil and food waste entering the system will upset the bacteria balance and also block pipes.

What do I do if my septic system is not working properly?

A failing septic system can contaminate underground water or surface water and can be a risk to the environment and your family's health. The following are guidelines on what to do if your septic system is not working properly:

1. If your system is not working properly you will need to contact a licensed plumber to come and inspect your system.
2. If your system needs any repairs or alterations you should always contact Council to check if you will need approval before you have a licensed plumber complete and repairs.
3. If your system is failing do not ignore the problem as it may only become worse and could cost more money to repair in the future.

Health Caution

Septic tanks do not kill pathogenic bacteria, viruses or parasites. Septic tank effluent must be treated with extreme caution and contact with people, food, clothing and pets must be prevented! Wash your hands after inspecting the tank. Under no circumstances should septic effluent be pumped out onto the ground surface.

Council Officers are available to give you advice on your system and the options available to you.

If you have any comments or questions on any of the matters, please contact Council's Environmental Health Team.

Phone: (02) 6767 5555

Email: trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au

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