SACRAMENTO COUNTY

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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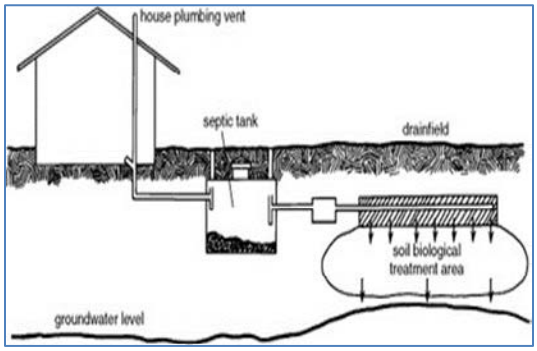
FACT SHEET: SEPTIC SYSTEMS AND FLOODING

During a flood event, your septic system and well water may be impacted. As a homeowner not dependent on a public sanitary sewer connection, you will need to take care of your septic system until the flood water recedes.



Septic systems need special care before, during and after flooding. Heavy rains and floods can cause a sanitary septic system to reduce its ability to treat wastewater from the home. When a septic system leach field is saturated, there is no place for the wastewater to go and it can potentially back up into the home. Bacteria and pathogens may be present in wastewater which can be harmful to people, pets and livestock. These pathogens may contaminate your drinking water and make it unsafe to consume. It is best to ensure the wastewater stays in the septic tank until the saturated soils have dried out.

- A flooded septic system is not safe to use. Limit uses in the home that would add wastewater to the septic system. Such uses are washing clothes, dishes, taking baths or showers, and using the toilet. Safely shut off any flooded electrical components.
- Children, pets and livestock should stay away from a flooded septic system. Sewage may contain bacteria and pathogens that can make you sick.
- The septic tank may be pumped **AFTER** a flood event. During flooding, an empty tank can float and may damage attached components and piping.
- **AFTER** a flood, have the septic system serviced and inspected for damage. Signs of damage may include settling, the inability to accept wastewater or soil erosion. A septic system professional will be able to check the system for blockages, remove debris and determine if any repairs are needed.

- Well water should not be used for consumption until **AFTER** it has been tested to ensure that it is free from contaminants.
- Driving or operating equipment on a saturated leach field should be avoided. These activities can compact the soil which could impact the ability of the leach field to function properly. Compacted soils may cause the septic system to fail.
- Examine electrical connections for damage before restoring power.
- Only certified and trained specialists should inspect and repair a septic system. If the system needs to be repaired, a permit may be necessary. Contact Sacramento County Environmental Management Department for information about when a permit would be required.

If you have any questions, call Sacramento County Environmental Management Department at

916-875-8400