

Drainfield Care - Large On-site Sewage Systems Fact Sheet



Caring for Your LOSS Drainfield and Reserve Areas

The owner of a large on-site sewage system (LOSS) must protect all related assets, including the **active and reserve** drainfield areas. This includes components located in easement areas. Activities that may damage the system, its ability to treat sewage, cause a threat to public health or the environment, or anything that hinders, disrupts or interferes with the use or proper functioning of the septic system are prohibited. The reserve area is an area that may be used for replacing or expanding the drainfield. Protecting the drainfield and reserve areas includes but is not limited to the following activities.

Do and Don't	Reasons
Do ensure there is access for operations, maintenance, monitoring, repair, and replacement of every portion of the system.	Tank pump-out, inspection, replacing tanks or pumps, repairing cracked pipes, etc.
Don't build structures over any of the areas in the drainfield and reserve areas.	Need access for repair/maintenance; prevent compaction; allow air exchange.
Don't allow vehicle traffic, including dirt bikes, or parking over any part of the drainfield and reserve areas.	Prevent compaction and broken pipes; allow access for routine observation and maintenance.
Don't pave or pour concrete over the drainfield and reserve areas, sewage tanks, or pump tanks.	Drainfields must have air exchange to function properly; prevent compaction.
Do ensure there is access for construction of drainfield in reserve area, when the state approves such design.	When some or all the existing drainfield fails, or if usage exceeds design capacity, the reserve area must be developed.
Do protect soil from damage and compaction.	Protect current and future areas to help prevent costly repairs.
Don't plant trees or other vegetation planted or growing over or near (within 30 feet) of the drainfield or reserve area. Regularly mowed grass is okay.	Tree and brush roots damage drainfields; brush may conceal possible failure (wet spots). Grass can prevent soil erosion.
Don't allow stock or other animals, including dog-runs over the drainfield and reserve areas.	Prevent compaction and broken pipes.
Don't do any digging, plowing, or rototilling.	Prevent pipe breakage and damage to the soil structure.
Do divert water from downspouts and other stormwater away from the drainfield.	Drainfields do not have an unlimited capacity and when saturated don't function as intended.
Don't use sprinkler systems or do any watering within 10 feet.	Water displaces air in drainfield soil and encourages excessive root growth.
Don't install other underground utility lines or French drains in the drainfield or reserve areas, or near tanks.	Water displaces air in drainfield soil.

Do ensure there are no groundwater wells within 100 feet (at minimum). Prevent groundwater and drinking water pollution; prevent flooding of drainfield.

For more information visit our website at www.doh.wa.gov/loss or contact the LOSS Program at 360-236-3330 or wastewatermgmt@doh.wa.gov.

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