



ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS STANDING WATER IN MONITORING PIPES

An On-site Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) consists of two main components, a septic tank and soil treatment area. Each soil treatment area (“leach field”) is required to have a standpipe(s) or observation pipe(s) to allow the level of water in the soil treatment area to be observed. When removing the cap from a soil treatment area monitoring pipe, water may be visible. Occasional standing water may not be a problem; however, water that stands or “ponds” within the soil treatment area for several weeks may be a result of one of the following problems:

1. A leaking plumbing fixture may be adding too much water into the OWTS. For example, a single leaking toilet can add an additional 1,000 gallons per day into your OWTS.
2. Too much water is being used in the house.
3. If your OWTS has trenches, the wastewater coming out of the septic tank is not being properly distributed to all the trenches.
4. The soils in the treatment area are clogged and are not absorbing the water at the design acceptance rate.

To address problems 1-3 above, the following are recommended.

1. Check your plumbing fixtures for leaks or hire a plumber to check the fixtures. If leaks are discovered, have them repaired as soon as possible.
2. Conserve water in the home and reduce heavy use on a particular day. For example, if you do several loads of laundry on one day, do your laundry over several days instead.
3. Consider having a water meter installed to monitor the amount of water used in the home. The meter should be installed to only measure water used within the home. A typical OWTS is designed to accommodate 150 gallons of wastewater per day for each bedroom in the home. So, for a 3 bedroom home, the OWTS is designed for a peak flow of 450 gallons.
4. If your OWTS has trenches and a distribution box, have the “d-box” checked to see if the outlet pipes are all at the same elevation. In some cases, the “d-box” may be buried below the ground and may need to be excavated. If the outlet pipes are not level, “speed levelers” are available to “level up” the pipes, and can be installed on the outlet pipes to adjust their elevations.
5. If your OWTS is a “drip irrigation” system that is dosed with a pump, have the pump floats and settings checked. Improper float settings may result in the absorption area receiving too much water each time the pump runs.

If standing water still persists after checking the above recommendations, it is possible that the soils in the treatment area are clogged and are not absorbing the water at the design acceptance rate. If this is the case, you should monitor the water level in the monitoring pipe in the soil treatment area on a monthly basis. If the water level in the pipe is found to be increasing, you should consider expanding the OWTS by installing an additional soil treatment area. This will allow the existing soil treatment area to “rest” and recover while the new soil treatment area is being used.