

# SEPTIC TIMES

2004

www.effluent.co.nz

ISSUE 1

## Where Does it Go When I Flush? and ... Will We Meet Again?

So you would like to learn about your septic tank system! No matter why the reason, through this and future issues of "Septic Times", you will find that a septic system is an interesting device. Why? Because it is a simple technology that effectively protects human health and the environment from the effects of human domestic wastewater. However, though a simple technology, the processes that treat the wastewater are quite complex, and most people do not really know how they work.

"Septic Times", is intended to take some of the mystery out of "that thing" we call the septic tank by showing you how your tank works and at the same time giving you pointers on caring for your tank and working with you to avoid costly maintenance through neglect or lack of knowledge.



**SEPTIC TANK SERVICE**

Phone Richard  
**0800 333 583**  
**0800 EFFLUENT**

**EFFLUENT SERVICES LIMITED**

www.effluent.co.nz

## TABLE TOPICS

It has been said that it is not polite to discuss the Septic Tank at the family dinner table. Undoubtedly, it becomes very much the topic of the day when it pokes it's unsightly head out of the closest gully trap or gives off an odour akin to that of the Sp pools in Rotorua.

## Tank of the Month

A MAJOR blow-out of a domestic sewage system at a Thornton Rd property required drastic action right on Christmas .

The timely call to Effluent Services was to empty not just the septic tank, but also the children's new sand-pit.

Two weeks earlier, the new owners had modified an existing fish pond (sunken bath-tub) into a stylishly practical sand-pit for the children's Christmas gift only to find later that the bath had been plumbed into the septic tank for convenient emptying.

The drain-layer assisting in the clean-up discovered that sand had inadvertently been washed down the plug hole of the bath blocking the inlet to the septic tank resulting in a build-up of sewerage from the house which in turn washed back up the plug hole filling the sand pit.

Although causing minor grief and inconvenience for the couple and their children; a single night at the in-laws and a quick visit to the doctor the following day to ensure all immunisation was up-to-date, and all was back to normal. All except the sand pit that is, which was immediately back on the drawing board for some much needed alterations.

The moral of this story is that; only toilet, bathroom, kitchen and laundry waste should go into the septic tank.

Council's now recommend that Septic Tanks are cleaned thoroughly through the removal of all solid matter every 18 months to two years. To leave your tank un-maintained longer may make it more difficult to clean resulting in increase charges. So, be sure you have a maintenance programme in place.

**SETTING THE STANDARD**

# How a Septic Tank works - Part 1

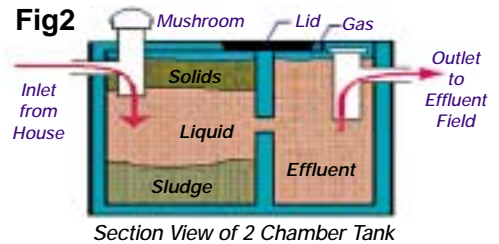
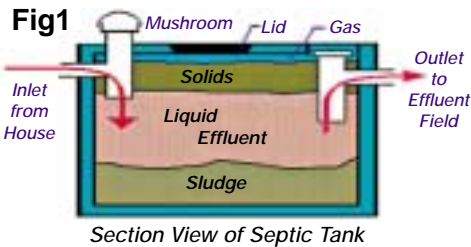
A septic system is composed of two basic components: a septic tank and effluent field. Each has a vital function in the treatment and disposal of domestic wastewater resulting from laundry and showers, kitchen wastes and body wastes. This relatively simple system of wastewater overhauling can effectively remove disease-causing pathogens and chemical nutrients from domestic wastewater for the life of the home when it is properly designed, constructed, operated and maintained.

Ideally, septic tanks should be large enough to hold the household wastes for a couple of days before it is discharged into the effluent field.

With this in mind—tank sizes range from normally 2,500 litres and upwards; the larger tanks usually servicing larger homes and larger numbers of people.

Though some older homes still support smaller tanks which more often than not, fail to cope with increasing water usage through modern technology such as wash machines etc.

Figure 1 is a simple drawings of the most common septic tank— a single chamber tank. Figure 2 is a simple drawing of a 2 chamber tank.



## Septic Tank Health

There are many major pollutants in petrochemical household cleaners (normal supermarket brands) that also have an effect on water quality, destroying the microbes that keep a septic tank working efficiently.

**CHLORINE:** (in spray cleaners and bleach). This bonds easily with organic chemicals to form organochlorines of which there are many dangers. Chlorine will also destroy the micro-organisms that live in the septic tanks and act to biodegrade the household waste.

**EDTA:** (Ethylene-diamino-tetra-acetate), **NTA** (Nitrilotriacetic acid). NTA, a carcinogenic phosphate substitute is banned in the US. As with EDTA, it can free heavy metals in the environment and reintroduce them into the food chain. NTA and EDTA are slow to biodegrade.

**OPTICAL WHITENERS:** These do not readily biodegrade, are toxic to fish and can create bacterial mutations.

**AMMONIA:** Source of nitrogen, and will also destroy the micro-organisms that live in the septic tanks and act to biodegrade the household waste.

**PETROCHEMICAL** based solvents, artificial colours, fragrances and surfactants. Many don't biodegrade easily and can effect water life forms and septic tanks.

*Malcolm Rands, ECOSTORE Founder*

*SIGN ON POOL GATE*

*"I don't swim in your toilet  
so don't pee in my pool!"*

## PRACTICAL OPERATING TIPS

- Practise water conservation where possible;
- Avoid showering and bathing while the dishwasher or laundry are in use;
- Try to distribute the laundry evenly throughout the week;
- Don't pour cooking oils, fats or grease down the kitchen sink;
- Avoid waste disposals;
- Don't flush non-biodegradable objects like pads, condoms, nappies etc;
- Never flush toxic substances like paint, oil, pesticides, solvents etc;
- Never put your head in a septic tank;
- Keep a plan of where your septic tank and drains are located;
- Have your tank emptied every two years;
- Don't construct buildings, decks, driveways or paths over the tank;
- Plant trees with extensive or deep roots away from the tank;
- Divert storm water runoff away from effluent/soakage field;

**SEPTIC TIMES** will discuss these tips in future issues explaining the reasons and the influence they have on your septic system.

Effluent Services is totally committed to the management of all Domestic & Industrial Liquid Waste with a strong emphasis on Environmental and Health & Safety policy. To update your knowledge on your septic system or for further information on Effluent Services and how we can be of assistance to you, visit us at:

[www.effluent.co.nz](http://www.effluent.co.nz)



**Waikato  
Water**  
& Cartage

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# FREE

Each issue of Septic Times will feature the results of a draw for a **FREE** tank clean.

**FREE TANK CLEAN FOR THIS ISSUE:**

Fran & Collin  
Cambridge Country Lodge  
Peake Rd.

### DID YOU KNOW!

Humans and cats are the only mammals who dispose of their effluent.

## EFFLUENT SERVICES

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Septic Tanks - Domestic & Commercial  
Port-a-Loo Servicing  
Overflow clean-ups  
Drain Unblocking  
Cowshed Sumps  
Trade Sewerage  
Grit Chambers  
Waste Water  
Spillages  
Flooding

**SETTING THE STANDARD**



Keep nasty chemicals out of your septic tank system...

Use natural, plant based household cleaners...

- Laundry liquid
- Laundry powder
- Dishwashing liquid
- Dishwashing powder
- All purpose cleaner



Ask for them at a supermarket or natural health store near you...

www.ecostore.co.nz  
0800 432 678

*no nasty chemicals*

ECOSTORE now has many septic tank producers, service companies, plus experts in waste water recommending their products. This is because their plant based household chemicals support the micro-organisms in the septic tanks that remove excess nutrients and toxic substances from the waste stream.

## HAIRDRESSERS

LORDS & LADIES  
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HAIR STUDIO

Phone (07) 827 9595

Shop 1 Victoria Plaza, Cambridge

## SEPTIC TANK SERVICE



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### CAUTION TO HOME OWNERS AND HOME BUYERS:

The information herein and in future prints is general in nature. Since conditions and requirements vary considerably between individual sites, always obtain qualified expert advice pertaining to the specific system about which you may have questions.

### DID YOU KNOW!

Almost half the total weight of a stool is made up of bacteria and .... the total weight of bacteria in an average sized adult is approximately 4-6 kilograms.

**MANY THANKS** to those who contributed to this issue of **SEPTIC TIMES**.

ALL ENQUIRIES/ARTICLES TO:  
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