Newsletter & Social Media Example Content

Topic: On-Site Sewage Facilities and Septic Systems

Newsletter Content:

If you aren’t connected to a residential sewage collection system, then you will need an on-site sewage facility (such as an aerobic treatment unit or a conventional septic system) to dispose of wastewater on your property. When properly installed and maintained, these systems do an excellent job of treating wastewater. However, if these systems are damaged or you don’t keep up with the required maintenance, these systems can fail. When an on-site sewage facility or septic system fails, improperly treated sewage can surface on your property, putting people at risk of disease. This untreated wastewater can also contaminate your water well, or even flow into nearby creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, and bays. Untreated wastewater from these failing systems is one of the leading causes of elevated bacteria levels in local waterways, as a single failing system can discharge over 75 billion bacteria per day. When this wastewater enters local waterways, it makes the water unsafe for recreational uses such as swimming.

On-site sewage facilities must be maintained and serviced routinely to ensure that their components are in working order. If not properly maintained, repair or replacement costs could be in the thousands. Homeowners should be aware of the need for regularly scheduled pumping and should contract with a licensed maintenance provider who will inspect and maintain the system on a routine basis. Also, keep an eye on water usage, as excessive water entering the system can prevent it from working as efficiently as possible. Most importantly, use common sense when flushing items down the toilet, and do not flush any item that may damage the system or prevent it from working properly.

To find a licensed maintenance provider check with [your county permitting office or health department]. They can provide you with a list or registered providers that have the necessary license to perform this Important job.

[insert any additional information specific to your community such as phone numbers to the department that permits on-site sewage facilities. This information can also be added to the example social media post language below.]

Social Media Content:

* Pro Tip: The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that septic tanks be pumped when solid waste accumulation is 30 – 50% of the tank capacity. Under normal use, this would typically be every 3 – 4 years. Pumping should only be performed by a licensed pumper or maintenance provider.
* To prevent excessive solids build-up in your septic system, do not flush items such as cigarette butts, dental floss, feminine hygiene products, paper towels, diapers, cat litter, food waste, or fats/oils/greases. These items can quickly fill the tank, requiring the system to be pumped more often.
* Pro Tip: On-site sewage facilities and septic systems use the biological activity of bacteria to help break down the solids in wastewater. To ensure that your system remains healthy, intact, and functional, do not flush anything down the toilet or pour anything down the drain that could kill these useful bacteria. This includes things such as paint, oil/gasoline, pesticides, or pharmaceuticals (particularly antibiotics).
* It is important to be mindful of excessive water use when you have an on-site sewage facility. If too much water goes into the system, it may not be adequately treated before disposal. Use low flow toilets and fix any water leaks. Space out loads of laundry to prevent too much water going into the tanks at one time.
* One of the most common signs of failure of an on-site sewage system is septic backflow. This occurs when the system is so full of water and wastes that it backs up into toilets and other plumbing fixtures. Signs of septic backflow include slow drains, black sewage in fixtures, and a very foul odor emanating from the toilet or bathtub. If this happens, you need to have your system pumped and evaluated for any additional problems.

Other Helpful Links & Resources:

* United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) SepticSmart Homeowners webpage: <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-homeowners>
* EPA’s How to Care for Your Septic System webpage: <https://www.epa.gov/septic/how-care-your-septic-system>
* Interactive presentation on How a Septic System Works: <https://www.gbra.org/presentations/septic/index.html> (English) and <https://www.gbra.org/presentations/septic-spanish/index.html> (Spanish)
* Homeowner’s Guide to Septic Systems brochure: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-06/documents/septicsmart_longhomeownerguide_english508_0.pdf> (English) and <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-06/documents/septicsmart_longhomeownerguide_spanish508_0.pdf> (Spanish)
* The Do’s and Don’ts of Your Septic System brochure: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-07/documents/septicsmart_week_flyer_082415_508-v2.pdf> (English) and <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-08/documents/septic_smart_dos_and_donts_spanish_version.pdf> (Spanish)

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This project is funded in part by the TCEQ through a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency.