

Hampstead Residents Urged to be “SepticSmart”

“Don’t overload the commode: only put things in the drain or toilet that belong there” — just one piece of advice from the Hampstead’s officials who want residents to be “SepticSmart”. September 20th through the 24th is the US Environmental Protection Agency’s ninth annual SepticSmart Week, and according to the EPA, more than one in five households in the United States, or 60 million people, depend on septic systems to treat their wastewater. Here in New Hampshire, the NHDES says approximately two-thirds of all New Hampshire homes are served by individual onsite septic systems, typically septic tanks and absorption fields that serve single-family residences.



SepticSmart Week is a nationwide initiative through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to raise awareness about the need for proper care and maintenance of septic systems. Failure to maintain a septic system can lead to backups and overflows, and those can result in costly repairs, polluted waterways and risks to public health and the environment. Proper care and maintenance are critical to septic system function and long-term performance.

Tips for septic maintenance include:

- **Protect It and Inspect It:** Homeowners should have their system inspected every three years by a licensed contractor, and have their tank pumped when necessary, typically every three to five years. Many septic system failures occur during the holiday season. Therefore, EPA encourages homeowners to get their septic systems inspected and serviced now, before inspectors’ schedules fill up around the holidays.
- **Think at the Sink:** Avoid pouring fats, grease and solids down the drain. These substances can clog a system’s pipes and drain field.
- **Don’t Overload the Commode:** Only put things in the drain or toilet that belong there. Coffee grounds, dental floss, diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, cigarette butts and cat litter can clog and damage septic systems.
- **Don’t Strain Your Drain:** Be water efficient and spread out water use. Fix plumbing leaks and install faucet aerators and water-efficient products. Spread out laundry and dishwasher loads throughout the day. Too much water at once

can overload a system that hasn't been pumped recently. If you have a sump pump, do not have it discharge to your septic system.

- **Shield Your Field:** Remind guests not to park or drive on a system's drain field, which could damage buried pipes or disrupt underground flow.

SepticSmart Week is part of EPA's year-round SepticSmart program. In addition to educating property owners, the program is an online resource for industry practitioners, local governments and community organizations, providing access to tools to educate clients and residents. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/septic.