



Baie-D'Urfé

# A Guide to Septic Systems



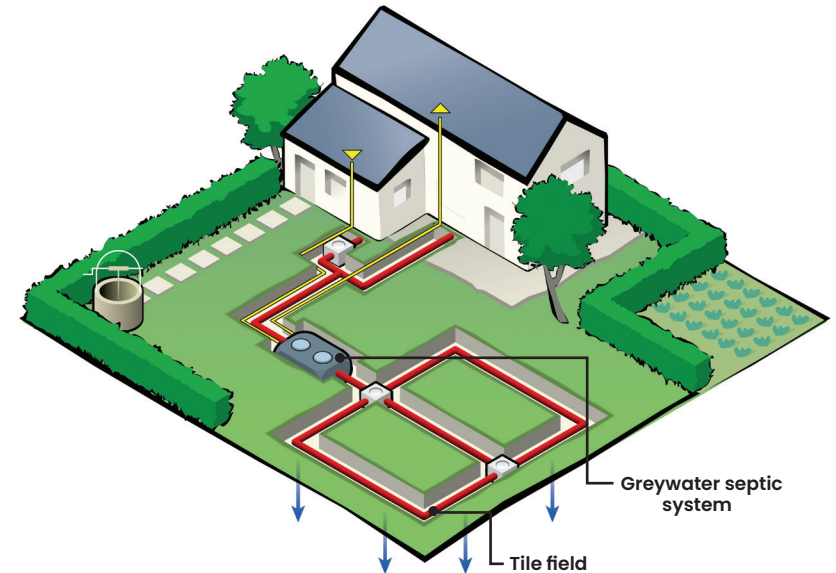
## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR BAIE-D'URFÉ CITIZENS:

- 1) Have your septic tank emptied every two (2) years.
- 2) Send your maintenance contract to the Public Works, Environment Department at the beginning of each year. If you don't have a maintenance contract, please contact the manufacturer, its representative or a qualified third party.
- 3) You are responsible for your septic system and its proper use and maintenance.
- 4) The Town of Baie-D'Urfé enforces the Regulation respecting wastewater disposal systems for isolated dwellings (chapter Q-2, r. 22) and may issue a statement of offence if the septic system does not conform to this regulation or if this regulation is not respected.
- 5) The Town covers the cost of septic tank emptying once every two (2) years. The Town is billed for the work and the property record is updated. The property owner must contact Public Works to schedule an appointment to have the tank emptied.
- 6) Manhole covers (septic tank covers) must be accessible at all times (Q-2, r.22) and never be obstructed or covered with any material (including soil). Otherwise, regulation Q-2, r.22 will be applied. Fines for that offence are between \$1,000 and \$100,000.
- 7) Citizens who choose to have the cleaning work done by a company not mandated by the Town will not be subsidized and will be responsible for the cost.
- 8) Emergency emptying of septic tanks is not covered by the Town.
- 9) Citizens must provide proof of septic tank cleaning to the Town every two (2) years. This also applies to any citizen who is not interested in receiving the grant.
- 10) The specific requirements for emptying your septic system must be communicated to the Town of Baie-D'Urfé Department of the Environment.
- 11) If your septic tank contains a prefilter (built after 2009 - mandatory filter), remember to clean it after emptying to reduce the risk of clogging.
- 12) A permit is required to repair an existing septic system or install a new septic system. This permit must be obtained from the Urban Planning Department before any work.

## SEPTIC SYSTEM

This is a sewage disposal and treatment system designed for isolated residences and other buildings that discharge **only domestic wastewater**. For these residences, a connection to a conventional sanitary sewer system is often not possible.

In general, in addition to the pipes, the septic system has two main components: the septic tank and the purification element (ex.: leaching field, sand filter, etc.).



Please note that the image used is an illustrative example and not an exact diagram of your septic system or any of its components.

## SEPTIC TANK

A septic tank is a primary wastewater treatment system. In other words, it is a tank designed to receive domestic sewage or wastewater, and is connected to pipes through which water enters on one side and leaves on the other.



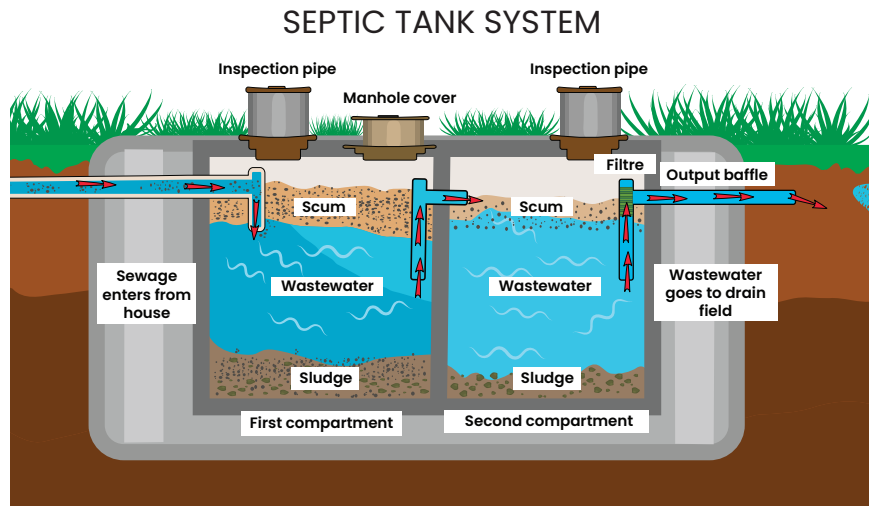
The septic tank is only one part of a septic system.

The septic tank usually consists of a tank with two compartments that is buried in the ground on your property. The volume of a septic tank can be different and depends on the needs of the residence (home).



In the first compartment, the heavier solid particles settle to the bottom of the tank and form the sludge, while scum and grease float to the surface. This first compartment separates solids and liquids by settling (decantation). The water with a lower solid content is then sent to the second compartment for settling of the remaining solids. The clarified wastewater is then discharged to the drain field.

Please note that the majority of septic tanks built after 2009 are equipped with a filter in the second compartment at the outlet of the water to the drain field. It is important to clean the filter after periodic emptying to reduce the risk of clogging<sup>1</sup>.



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**Most septic systems have two covers that must be accessible at all times (Q-2, r.22) and never be blocked or buried.**

For septic systems built and installed prior to 1980, it is possible that the septic tank has only one cover, but the other cover is probably buried a few feet away and you have to dig to access it.

**Please note that a septic tank should not be used as a garbage container under any circumstances.**

## DRAINAGE FIELD

The drain field distributes the liquid leaving a primary (septic tank) or secondary treatment system in order to complete the purification by infiltration into the receiving soil. The treatment element can be a leaching field composed of perforated pipes installed in trenches separated from each other by a filter medium. The type of treatment element chosen depends on the nature of the soil, the profile and surface area of the receiving land, the number of chambers, etc. As the water is dispersed through the filter media and the micro-organisms in the soil complete the domestic wastewater treatment process by digesting the impurities, the purified water seeps into the groundwater.

The Regulation respecting wastewater disposal systems for isolated dwellings provides for several types of purification elements depending on the nature of the soil and its permeability. Only the purifying elements described in the Regulation respecting wastewater disposal systems for isolated dwellings are authorized in Quebec.

**Please note that prior to undertaking any work, a permit must be obtained in accordance with applicable provincial and municipal regulations.**



Please note that the image used is an illustrative example and not an exact diagram of your septic system or any of its components.

<sup>1</sup> Please note these are general recommendations, always follow your individual maintenance guide for your septic system.

## EMPTYING SEPTIC TANKS

In Quebec, according to the requirements of the ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP), a septic tank that is used year-round must be emptied at least once every two (2) years. If this bylaw is not respected, the Town may apply the Regulation respecting wastewater disposal systems for isolated dwellings (chapter Q-2, r. 22) and issue a statement of offence\*.

*\* For emptying not carried out at least once every two (2) years – fines can range from \$1,000 to \$100,000 for an individual and from \$3,000 to \$600,000 for a corporation.*

To make an appointment for the emptying, the homeowner must contact Public Works, Town of Baie-D'Urfé Department of the Environment. The Town shall cover the cleaning cost of septic tanks for one (1) cleaning every two (2) years. The Town is billed for the work and the property record is updated.



Emergency emptying is not covered by the Town.

### SEPTIC TANK EMPTYING AREAS

Even years



Odd years

*This map is only intended to serve as a visual representation of the septic tank emptying project. The accuracy of the information contained in this map is not guaranteed.*

## EMPTYING/SELECTIVE EMPTYING PROCEDURE

According to the recommendations issued by the ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP), we proceed with selective emptying. This is a method of emptying septic tanks that consists of removing the sludge and scum, but the **clarified water without the scum and sludge is returned** to the septic tank. Selective emptying is ecological and meets very high standards when it comes to sustainable development.

Another advantage of this method is that the clarified water returned to the septic tank contributes to the restoration of the bacterial population. This step is very important because these bacteria are responsible for the majority of the treatment and decomposition of the organic matter contained in the domestic wastewater.

## WASTEWATER OVERFLOW

Septic tank wastewater can overflow in several places: on the ground, through the covers and into the house if you do not have a backflow valve. A frequent reason for this unpleasant overflow is a saturation of the leach fields or a clogging of the pipes or the filter.



In this case, it is better to contact a plumber rather than the Septic Tank emptying company, because a simple emptying will not solve this problem. In addition, a complete inspection of your septic system is strongly recommended.

You can avoid the following problems: unpleasant odours, soil infiltration, soil contamination, back flowing pipes, clogged pipes and drains, stalled sewage pump, tank saturation and clogging, sludge build-up, etc., by following simple septic tank maintenance tips. The most important thing is, of course, to use sanitary products properly (don't flush just anything down the toilet). Here is a partial list of things to avoid throwing into your septic system:




What you put into your septic system can significantly disrupt its operation, potentially render the system inoperative.

What NOT to flush down the toilet	Problems caused by these items	Where to drop it off
<b>Baby wipes, disinfectant wipes and other disposable wipes, cotton wipes, pieces of cloth, sanitary pads and tampons</b> <b>EVEN IF IT SAYS BIODEGRADABLE!</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pipe obstruction</li> <li>• Obstruction of sump pumps</li> <li>• Major breakdowns</li> </ul>	Garbage bin
<b>Edible fats and oils</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of hard, insoluble masses that clog the pipes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Small amount</b> - brown bin (compost bin) by soaking paper</p> <p><b>Large amount</b> - deposit the used oil or grease in a closed, leak-proof container and bring it to the HHW collections or to an eco-centre</p>
<b>Cat litter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant clogging of pipes</li> </ul>	Garbage bin
<b>Cotton swabs and cotton balls</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obstruction of sump pumps</li> <li>• Major breakdowns</li> </ul>	Garbage bin
<b>Condoms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major clogging of pipes</li> <li>• Major breakdowns</li> </ul>	Garbage bin
<b>Bleach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely harmful to the environment and to your septic tank</li> </ul>	Use white vinegar and baking soda to effectively clean your toilet

What NOT to flush down the toilet	Problems caused by these items	Where to drop it off
<b>Medications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollution of the water table and the local ecosystem on your land</li> </ul>	Pharmacy
<b>Chewing gum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sticking to the internal walls of the pipes</li> <li>• Major damage</li> </ul>	Garbage bin
<b>Hair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of hair clog</li> <li>• Pipe obstruction</li> </ul>	Brown bin
<b>Small animals (mice, goldfish, etc.)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pipe obstruction</li> </ul>	Brown bin
<b>Contact lenses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic pollution</li> </ul>	Garbage bin
<b>Cigarette butts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major breakdowns</li> </ul>	Garbage bin
<b>Food residue, coffee grounds and other food products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant increase in the accumulation of sludge that can cause clogging of the leaching fields</li> </ul>	Brown bin <b>DO NOT USE THE GARBURATOR FOR YOUR KITCHEN WASTE</b>

**Legend:**

-  Garbage bin
-  Brown bin
-  Eco-friendly solution
-  Pharmacy



**Remember that we only flush feces, urine and toilet paper down the toilet; nothing else!**

## MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The owner of a septic system must, at all times, have a maintenance contract with the manufacturer of the system, its representative or a qualified third party to perform a minimum of annual maintenance on the system to ensure that the expected performance is achieved.

By taking proper care of your septic system, you can avoid unnecessary expenses, preserve the health of your family, and protect the environment. It is therefore important to renew your maintenance contract at the beginning of every year and submit it to the Public Works to the Environmental department.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SEPTIC TANKS AND SYSTEMS

### 1 Why do I need a maintenance contract, isn't the Town responsible for the septic tank emptying now?

- a. Since 2020, the Town of Baie-D'Urfé has taken over the planning of septic tank emptying on its territory and assumed the costs. However, the maintenance contract is not linked to the Town's emptying contract. Every septic system requires regular inspection to ensure its integrity and proper operation. It is therefore important to get information from a specialist.
- b. The owner is still responsible for following up on the emptying of the septic system and providing proof to the Town.

### 2 Why do I need a maintenance contract, isn't it a municipal responsibility?

- a. The Town is only mandated to provide you with information that changes to the law have been made by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks. By informing you, we are ensuring that you are protected from the impact that these changes to the law may have on you.
- b. These maintenance contracts ensure that your system does not contaminate the environment, that each component is functioning properly and that its life expectancy has not been reached.

### 3 The company that does the emptying already inspects my tank during the emptying once every two (2) years. Isn't that enough proof of inspection?

The cleaning company's visit is only a partial inspection of your system. Your entire system is not inspected at this time.

### 4 My septic system is several years old and I don't know how it works or what type of system is in place. How can I get this information?

To obtain this information, please contact us by email at [info.fosses.septiques@baie-durfe.qc.ca](mailto:info.fosses.septiques@baie-durfe.qc.ca) or by phone at **514 457-5339**. However, this information may not be available from the municipality. A visit from an expert is your best option at this time.

### 5 I have never had any problems with my system, why should I have it inspected? Isn't that paying for nothing?

Each system has a highly variable life span depending on installation conditions. It is impossible to determine the condition of a leaching bed, even if you have never had a problem. Your leaching bed will continue to collect your wastewater, however, the treatment capacity of your soil or leaching system may be defective and expose you to health and environmental hazards as your soil becomes saturated with wastewater.

### 6 I have a new system, why would I need to have it inspected/maintained? It's definitely working well.

Advanced secondary or tertiary systems (Ecoflo, Bionest, Hydro-kinetic, System O, etc.) have more sophisticated purification elements to complete the purification cycle. However, they are more complex and require more frequent calibration, repair and changeover to ensure an optimal performance of the septic system.



**7** What exactly does a maintenance visit to my septic system entail?

Depending on the septic system you have, some parts may need maintenance, repair, replacement or calibration. For example, an Ecoflo system requires an inspection of the filtering medium. Its filtration capacity depends on its condition and its life span. It must be changed in order to ensure and respect the treatment conditions of your wastewater. Tertiary systems have a UV lamp that must be replaced regularly. Other aspects like these are inspected during a maintenance visit.

**8** I am aware of the inspection process for my system and each component and am currently inspecting it myself. Why would I need to pay someone to do it for me?

According to section 3.3 of Q-2 R.22, it is mandatory that you have a contract with a specialist. Anyone who violates this regulation is liable to a fine under Q-2 R.22. In addition, a poor inspection increases the risk of your system failing, which can lead to significant contamination of the land, exposing you to health and environmental risks.

**9** Which septic systems need a maintenance contract?

All systems listed in section 3.3 of Q-2 R.22.

**10** I am a new owner and the previous owner did not provide me with the documents on this subject. How can I access them?

To obtain this information, please contact us by email at [info.fosses.septiques@baie-durfe.qc.ca](mailto:info.fosses.septiques@baie-durfe.qc.ca) or by phone at 514 457-5339.

**11** How can I access the certificates of location of my septic system?

To obtain this information, please contact us by email at [info.fosses.septiques@baie-durfe.qc.ca](mailto:info.fosses.septiques@baie-durfe.qc.ca) or by phone at 514 457-5339. These documents may not be available from the Town. If this is the case, you will need to request the assistance of a surveyor to locate your septic system.

**12** There are facilities above my pit doors (patio, concrete slabs, etc.), why do I have to have it emptied so frequently if it can't possibly be full?

- a. Section 13 of the Regulation respecting wastewater treatment and disposal for isolated dwellings stipulates that each septic tank used year-round must be emptied every two (2) years.
- b. It is also not recommended to build any facility that may interfere with or prevent the emptying of your septic tank. In case of emergency, the Town may require the emptying of your septic tank, without notice. It is therefore not allowed to build any facility that may interfere with the emptying or block access to the septic system.

**13** How often does the company have to inspect my system each year?

It depends on your septic system and the terms of your maintenance contract. It can be once a year, once every six (6) months, once every two (2) months or every two (2) weeks.

**14** What is the average life span of a septic system?

- a. The life of a treatment system depends on several factors. First of all, the installation conditions of your system can influence its wastewater treatment capacity. It is highly important to do regular maintenance of your septic system in order to prevent irreversible damage.
- b. In general, a conventional septic system installed under ideal conditions can have a life span of 15 to 25 years.

**15** When do I send proof of inspection to the Town?

Under the terms of your contract and/or contract renewal, proof of inspection must be sent to the municipality AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH YEAR.

**16** How much can the maintenance service cost?

This depends on your septic system.

**17** How do I get a copy of the proof of emptying my septic tank?

To obtain this information, please contact us by email at [info.fosses.septiques@baie-durfe.qc.ca](mailto:info.fosses.septiques@baie-durfe.qc.ca) or by phone at **514 457-5339**. For the current year, you may also contact the company that pumped your septic tank.

**18** Is it normal for my septic tank to have only one cover?

Some older septic tank models may have only one cover. However, you must ensure that this opening provides access to BOTH compartments of your septic tank. If this is not the case, or if your septic tank has only one compartment, it is probably not in compliance and does not provide the necessary treatment to ensure the decontamination of your wastewater.

**19** Why is it so important to have access to both covers?

As mentioned earlier, most of the sludge accumulates in the first compartment, but there is always a small amount of suspended matter that is carried to the second compartment and settles there. For this reason it is essential to dig out this second opening, so that the technician can also empty the sludge and scum from the compartment under the second cover.

**20** Are the septic tank products sold in stores (ex.: enzymes) good for my septic tank?

- a. Septic systems rely on natural processes to treat your wastewater. The addition of products can lead to a disruption of the bacterial activity inside your septic tank, making the treatment of your wastewater ineffective. Moreover, these products end up in the environment and contaminate the receiving soil and the water table.
- b. An emptying of your septic tank is essential to prevent any contamination or overflow. In no case, do the products sold in stores replace this maintenance.
- c. If the use of these products has become essential to the proper functioning of your treatment system, it is very likely that your system is outdated or defective. These products will not correct problems in your system. You must ensure that your system is maintained and repaired so that its natural function is assured.

**21** Who is authorized to inspect and attest to the functionality of my septic system?

You are free to choose a company that offers this service or to deal with a professional who is required to hold a valid Certificate of Wastewater Works Operation.



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[baie-durfe.qc.ca](http://baie-durfe.qc.ca)

For any questions regarding septic systems or if you didn't find answers to your questions, please contact the department of Environment by calling us at **514 457-7604** or by sending an email to [environnement@baie-durfe.qc.ca](mailto:environnement@baie-durfe.qc.ca).

To schedule your septic tank cleaning, please call: **514 457-5339**.

For all questions regarding obtaining a permit to change a septic system, contact the Urban Planning Department at **514 457-3321**.



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