

# SPEAKING OF: Septic Systems



FACT  
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Source Water Protection is a provincial program to protect our municipal drinking water sources (water found in lakes, rivers and underground) from contamination and overuse.



## Out of sight, out of mind

Your septic system is located underground. When functioning correctly, it provides a safe, reliable way of treating your household waste and wastewater. In fact, you may not always even remember that it's there. But just like your home appliances, roof or furnace, septic systems need maintenance, repair and eventual replacement. A properly installed and maintained septic system should last 20 to 30 years.



## Protecting water: caring for your septic system

### DO

- Know the location of your septic system and leaching bed
- Get your septic system pumped every 3 to 5 years
- Keep accurate records of your septic maintenance
- Get your effluent filter checked and cleaned every year
- Divert surface water, including gutters and your sump pump away from your leaching bed
- Replace inefficient toilets with low flow models

### DON'T

- Put cooking oils or food waste down the drain
- Pour or flush hazardous chemicals, or pharmaceuticals
- Use special additives that claim to enhance your system's performance – you don't need them
- Drive or park over your tank or leaching bed
- Plant trees and shrubs near the tank or leaching bed
- Use anti-bacterial soaps, bleaches and harsh cleaning products



## A failing septic system can contaminate drinking water

A malfunctioning septic system can release wastes and bacteria into the ground and can contaminate groundwater or surface water. Because our drinking water comes from these sources, if they are contaminated the safety of our water may be compromised. A failed septic system may also decrease your property value, and cause expensive repairs. Regular maintenance will extend the life of your system and save you money.



## Signs that your septic system isn't working

- Bad smell
- Appearance of an unpleasant-looking liquid in the leaching bed
- Spongy spots on or near the leaching bed
- Sewage on the ground or near the leaching bed
- Slow moving or backed-up drains in your home
- More lush vegetation over the septic bed
- Not all warning signs are visible above ground – an inspection of the tank is necessary to be certain.



## What do I need to do?

Regular inspections every three years can help prevent problems. For a small number of properties, an inspection every five years is required under the building code, the *Clean Water Act*, and the Grand River Source Protection Plan.

If your property is located near a municipal well the municipal Chief Building Official may contact you to ensure your system is being maintained properly. For more information on septic systems, or on how to get in touch with a qualified septic contractor, contact your local municipality.

### ASK TO SEE THE LICENSE:

Anyone in the business of installing, repairing, servicing or pumping septic systems must be licensed by the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.



## Private wells are your responsibility

The measures put in place to protect municipal drinking water supplies do not include private drinking water wells. As a private well owner, you still need to be regularly testing your water and you need to make sure you're maintaining your well. If you have any health concerns about your well water, contact your local district health unit.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

**Township of East Garafraxa  
Township of Amaranth**  
374028 6<sup>th</sup> Line  
Amaranth, ON L9W 0M6  
Phone: (519) 941-1007

**Grand River Conservation Authority**  
400 Clyde Road  
Cambridge, ON N1R 5W6  
Phone: (519) 621-2761

**Credit Valley Conservation Authority**  
1255 Old Derry Road  
Mississauga, ON L5N 6R4  
Phone: (905) 670-1615

**Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority**  
8195 8<sup>th</sup> Line  
Utopia, ON L0M1T0  
Phone: (705) 424-1479

**DRINKING WATER  
SOURCE PROTECTION**  
ACT FOR CLEAN WATER

**CTC Source Protection Region**  
[www.ctcswp.ca](http://www.ctcswp.ca)

**Lake Erie Source Protection Region**  
[www.sourcewater.ca](http://www.sourcewater.ca)

**South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region**  
[www.ourwatershed.ca](http://www.ourwatershed.ca)