

NRPA – SEPTIC TANKS

Having a septic tank system is an opportunity to tread lightly on the earth – it encourages you to use less water and less harmful cleaning products. It should also save you money on your monthly rates bill.

Septic tank care is crucial to maintain a healthy septic system and if not treated correctly can affect the ground water, lakes and streams with bacteria viruses, nitrates and chemicals.

HOW TO HAVE A HEALTHY, FUNCTIONING SEPTIC TANK SYSTEM

For detailed information provided by the City of Cape Town on their website click [here](#).

Summary

1. Installation

If you have a recently installed septic tank, or are installing a new one, ensure your plumber has done the **installation correctly**. See the link/attached for details and drawings.

We have had instances of incorrectly connected tanks resulting in the need for constant pumping.

Make sure you use a (local) plumber who has experience installing septic tanks and soak-a-ways.

Make sure you do not have trees/shrubs with invasive root systems near your tank

Plant grass where the system drains into the soil to help increase water absorption.

It is not advised that vegetables and fruits are planted in this area.

2. Grease Traps

There should be a **grease trap** connected between all kitchen sinks & dishwasher and the septic tank. This includes sinks for filtered water/veg&fruit washing.

This grease trap needs to be cleaned regularly (probably weekly for most households with 4+ people.)

If grease enters your tank it coats the interior and also prevents bacteria from decomposing the waste.

Wipe greasy pans and plates with paper towel before washing.

Do not pour used oil down your drain.

3. Water Use

The less water that goes down your toilets and from your washing machines into the septic tank, the better your tank will work.

Too much water entering the tank at once can limit the bacterial activity that decomposes the solid waste. This means your tank contents will not drain into the soil, resulting in constantly full tanks.

Consider improving your toilet flushing system. Do not run half full dishwashers and washing machines on full programmes. Consider staggering your washing over a few days rather than doing it all at once.

If you have a large household or run a B&B or guesthouse, you probably need more than one septic tank & soak-a-way system.

4. Solids

No solids down the toilet. This includes coffee grounds, tampons, condoms, paper towels, tissues, matches, cigarette butts and food.

Put notices up in your bathrooms so that visitors, contractors and others know not to do this.

Use good quality toilet paper that dissolves quickly.

5. Cleaning materials

This system works via bacterial activity decomposing solid waste into a liquid that drains into a soak-a-way or sometimes straight into soil.

If you use anti-bacterials or strong bleaches you kill the bacteria in the tank. Then your system will not work properly, resulting in a constantly full tank.

This includes turps and paint tainted water washed down drains after cleaning painting materials.

Having a septic tank system is an opportunity to use less water and move towards the use of more natural soaps and cleaning detergents.

6. Pumping

You should not have to pump your tank more than once or twice a year. More likely the latter in Noordhoek where we have a high water table, especially in winter.

Any more than this and your system is not working optimally.

The City of Cape Town will pump your tank for free, unless you require pumping more than once a month.

You can call the toll free number on your rates bill or request service via the website link also to be found on your monthly rates bill.

7. Adding Bacteria

Although most literature says this is not necessary, there are some products that we have used with success. There is an "Ethical and Eco-friendly" Enchantrix product for unblocking drains and removing grease that can be safely used in drains and toilets- <http://www.enchantrix.co.za> - warehouse in retreat. This is a biological product that breaks down grease and waste.

There are other products available at our local Pick 'n Pay and Chapmans Hardware store.

WHAT IF I NEED MY TANK PUMPED?

This process has changed recently, not without glitches. These have been reported so hopefully the issues are resolved.

You can phone 086 010 3089 (the number on your rates bill) or you can visit the website <https://www.capetown.gov.za/> and go to "Service Requests" to do an online service delivery request. We have found this more efficient.

However – the biggest problem we have in Noordhoek is that our house numbers do not match the numbers on our rates bills or even on the City’s database. This makes it difficult for the drivers to find us.

To solve this problem:

- Please check the number on your rates bill and make sure it matches the number on your property
- If you only have a name and not a number, please indicate this clearly and make sure the operator spells it correctly
- Please give both a landline and cell number when you request a service
- Make sure your bell is working properly

Under no circumstances should residents bribe drivers – this perpetuates corruption and minimizes service delivery.

WHAT IF I AM CURRENTLY BEING CHARGED FOR SEWAGE ON MY RATES BILL?

Please see the official response below:

“Kindly be advised that should a customer have a septic tank at their property then we cannot/shouldn't be charging for sewerage. To please visit your nearest municipal offices with the account numbers of the customers who are being billed for a service not used and we will investigate and adjust their accounts accordingly.”

Kind Regards,

Corporate Services, Customer Relations
Civic Centre
12 Hertzog Boulevard, Cape Town
Tel: 086 010 3089
Fax: 086 576 1568
Correspondence.crm@capetown.gov.za

So if you have a septic tank system, are not connected to the municipal sewage system and are being charged for sewage (which is a rate based on your water consumption) please visit your Plumstead with your rates bill and your ID and ask to have your rates readjusted. Note: they should also refund you for amounts paid to date.

You may be charged a basic tariff for septic tanks. There are two tariffs, one for vacant land and one for residential land. This is much less than being charged an amount based on your monthly water usage.