STRENGTH · RELIABILITY · SAFETY

**STEEL SEPTIC**

# THE ARIZONA SEPTIC HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to protect your home, your tank, and your peace of mind — written for Arizona homeowners.

A FREE GUIDE FROM STEEL SEPTIC & ENVIRONMENTAL

WELCOME

# KNOW YOUR SYSTEM

If your home runs on a septic system, you're responsible for one of the most important — and most ignored — systems on your property. Most homeowners never think about it until something goes wrong. By then, it's usually expensive.

This guide changes that. In the next few pages, you'll learn how your system works, the early warning signs that something's off, and the simple habits that keep a septic system running for decades instead of failing in a few years.

No jargon. No scare tactics. Just what an Arizona homeowner actually needs to know.

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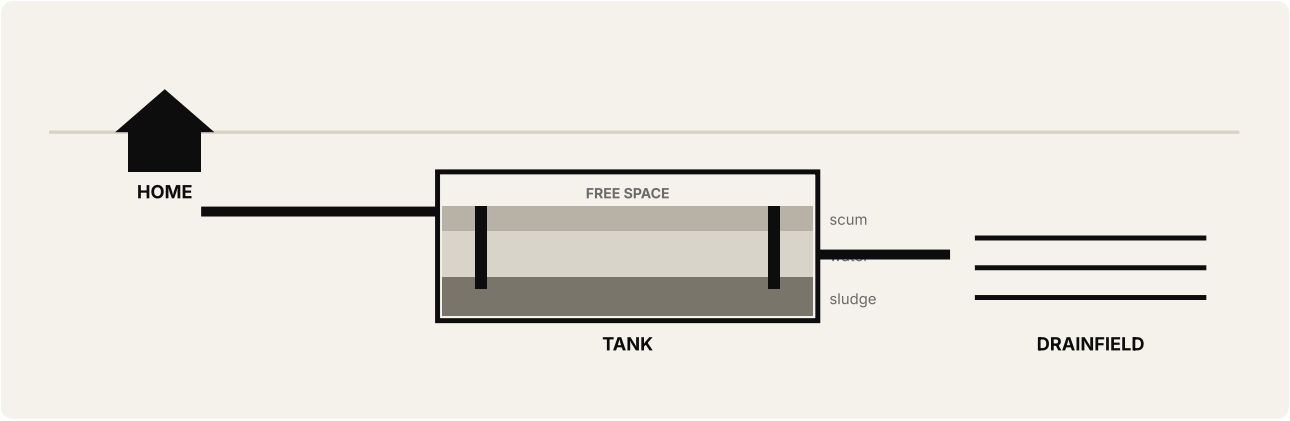
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THE BASICS

# HOW YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM WORKS

Your septic system is a small, self-contained wastewater treatment plant buried in your yard. It has two main parts — and a few details most homeowners are never told.




**The tank.** Everything from your drains flows here first. As waste enters, the tank's baffles slow the water and start a gentle circular motion that helps separate everything out: solids sink to the bottom as sludge, grease and oils float to the top as scum, and the clearer water in the middle moves on. Bacteria inside break down the solids over time.

**Free space you can't see.** Every tank is built with a mandatory free space above the normal operating level. That's why a "1,000-gallon" tank can actually hold hundreds of gallons more than its rated size — the baffles are set at heights that leave room above the working water line.

**The drainfield.** The clarified water flows into perforated pipes buried in gravel, then slowly filters down through the soil — which removes the last impurities before the water rejoins the groundwater.

**THE STEEL SEPTIC DIFFERENCE**

We don't just pump and leave. Steel Septic locates your tank, checks the baffles and levels, and shows you what's actually happening under your yard — no guesswork.

CATCH IT EARLY

# 5 WARNING SIGNS YOUR SYSTEM IS IN TROUBLE

Septic problems are almost always invisible until they're serious. Watch for these.

01 **Every drain in the house runs slow — and it starts at the lowest one.** One slow sink is just a clog; sinks sit too high in the plumbing to signal a septic problem. When the system itself is backing up, the first place you'll see it is the lowest drain — usually a bathtub or shower — because that's the closest point to the tank.

02 **Gurgling sounds** in your toilet or bathtub when water drains.

03 **Foul odors indoors or near the tank.** Odor isn't always a "failure" — more often it signals an issue with the bacteria and pH balance inside the tank, or a high water level in the system. Either way, it's worth a look.

04 **Soggy, unusually green patches** in the yard over the drainfield — that's wastewater surfacing.

05 **A slow or plugged filter.** Most newer systems have an effluent filter. When it clogs, it's designed to slow the system down — which can back things up if it isn't cleaned on a regular service.

If you notice any of these, don't wait. Early attention is the difference between a routine service call and a full system replacement.

THE SILENT CULPRIT

# THE #1 CAUSE OF BACKUPS

This one surprises almost everyone.

## A LEAKING TOILET IS THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF SEPTIC BACKUP.

A worn flapper drips quietly into the bowl and sends a constant stream of water into your tank — 24 hours a day. Most homeowners have no idea it's happening until it's too late. That constant flow overwhelms the tank, pushes solids into the drainfield, and floods a system built for normal, intermittent use. Silent, gradual, and completely preventable.

**HOW TO CHECK — 2 MINUTES**

Start at the tank. Open the back lid and look at the water level against the overflow tube in the middle of the tank. The water should sit **below** the top of that tube — if it's running into the tube, it's usually a simple float adjustment.

Then check the toilet. If you're still not sure, put a few drops of food coloring in the toilet **tank** (not the bowl) and wait 15 minutes without flushing — if color appears in the bowl, your flapper is leaking. But honestly, if a toilet's running, just replace the flapper. It's a few-dollar fix that protects a system worth thousands.

PROTECT THE BACTERIA

# WHAT YOU SHOULD NEVER FLUSH OR POUR

Your system relies on bacteria to break down waste. The wrong materials kill that bacteria or clog the system outright.

### DON'T FLUSH

—"Flushable" wipes — they don't break down, **even if the package says "septic safe."** They aren't.

—Diapers — adult and child

—Feminine products

—Intimacy products

—Paper towels & tissues

—Cotton swabs & dental floss

—Cat litter

—Medications

### DON'T POUR

—Cooking grease & oils

—Harsh chemicals & solvents

—Paint

—Excessive bleach & antibacterial cleaners — they kill the good bacteria too

**The simple rule:** if it isn't human waste or toilet paper, it doesn't belong in your septic system.

**THE STEEL SEPTIC DIFFERENCE**

Not sure what's already down there? A Steel Septic pump-out clears built-up non-degradables before they reach — and ruin — your drainfield.

STAY AHEAD OF IT

# YOUR MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

A septic system is low-maintenance, not no-maintenance. Stay on this rhythm.

| | |
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| **PUMP EVERY 1 TO 3 YEARS** | Pumping keeps your tank in good working order. More on why this matters below. |
| **CLEAN THE FILTER** | Newer systems have an effluent filter that should be cleaned every year. A plugged filter is designed to back your system up — so this isn't optional on modern systems. |
| **INSPECTION** | A good company checks the key components every time it pumps your tank. |
| **ONGOING** | Spread out water use (don't run every load of laundry on one day), fix leaks promptly, and keep heavy vehicles and deep-rooted trees off the drainfield. |

Keep a simple record of when your tank was last pumped and inspected — it makes every future service faster and cheaper.

**THE STEEL SEPTIC DIFFERENCE**

Steel Septic keeps the record for you. We log every pump, filter clean, and inspection — and send you a reminder when you're due, so nothing slips.

THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT HABIT

# PUMP EVERY 1 TO 3 YEARS

The most common septic mistake is waiting too long between pump-outs. Most household tanks need pumping every 1 to 3 years. Regular pumping is preventative maintenance — the same way an oil change protects your engine long before anything sounds wrong.

**A tank has to stay at the right level to work.** People assume a tank should take years to refill — but a septic tank is designed to hold a certain working level of liquid at all times. Seeing water in your tank soon after a pump is normal; it's how the system is supposed to operate.

**It protects your drainfield.** Your tank separates waste into layers. When solids build up too high, they spill into the drainfield and clog the soil permanently — the most expensive failure a septic system can have.

**It catches problems while they're cheap.** A routine pump-out is when a tech spots a cracked baffle, a failing component, or an early blockage — before it becomes a backup inside your home.

**Every tank fills at its own pace.** Household size, water use, and a garbage disposal all change how fast solids build up. A regular check measures your actual buildup instead of guessing.

**It's a fraction of the cost of failure.** Routine pumping costs a little. Replacing a ruined system or drainfield can run $15,000–$50,000.

Don't wait until something smells. Every 1 to 3 years, or sooner if a check says so: that's how a septic system lasts for decades.

AVOID THESE

# THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF SEPTIC

Most septic failures come down to a handful of everyday habits. Avoid these seven, and you'll prevent the vast majority of problems before they ever start.

01 **Don't do laundry back to back.** Space it out — one load in the morning, one in the evening. Your tank needs recovery time between big surges of water.

02 **Don't skip your pump-out or filter cleaning.** Wait too long and solids overflow into your drainfield — or a plugged filter backs the system up into your home.

03 **Don't wash paint or chemicals down the drain.** They kill the bacteria your system depends on, and it can take years of pumping to undo the damage.

04 **Don't pour grease down the sink.** Grease floats and builds a scum layer that never really goes away. Scoop it, jar it, trash it.

05 **Don't flush wipes, tampons, or intimacy products.** "Flushable" wipes aren't safe for septic — they don't break down, and they'll destroy your drainfield.

06 **Don't use Drano or chlorine tablets.** These chemicals kill the living bacteria your system needs. Slow drain? Call us instead of reaching for the chemicals.

07 **Don't ignore a running toilet.** A leaking flapper runs 24 hours a day and overwhelms your tank — the single most common cause of backups. If you're jiggling the handle, fix the flapper now.

BUILT FOR HERE

# ARIZONA-SPECIFIC NOTES

Septic systems behave differently in the desert. A few local realities matter.

**Different leach areas.** Arizona homes use several different types of leach areas — from drainfields to seepage pits to chambers. They all work on the same principle of water filtering down through the soil, but which one you have affects how your system handles volume and how it's serviced.

**Heat & dry soil.** Arizona's dry, often caliche-heavy soil affects how well a drainfield absorbs water. Drainfields here can be more sensitive to overload than in wetter climates.

**Monsoon season.** Heavy seasonal rains saturate the ground and temporarily reduce how much your drainfield can handle. A system already near capacity is most likely to back up during monsoon.

**Water conservation works in your favor.** Efficient fixtures and mindful use don't just lower bills — they directly reduce strain on your system.

**Local rules.** A transfer inspection is required at the time of a property sale — and this is a state of Arizona rule, not just Maricopa County. If you're buying or selling, both the inspection and the owner transfer forms will be required.

DON'T WAIT

# WHEN TO CALL A PRO

Call a professional when you see any warning sign, when your tank is due for pumping or inspection, or any time you're unsure. Septic issues only get more expensive the longer they wait.

And here's what separates a septic company you can trust from one you can't:

## YOU SHOULD NEVER FEEL RUSHED, TALKED DOWN TO, OR LEFT GUESSING.

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| **THEY ANSWER** | When you have a backup, you need a person — not a voicemail. |
| **THEY SHOW UP** | On the day and time they told you they would. |
| **THEY EXPLAIN** | In plain language, so you understand your own system. |
| **THEY STAND BEHIND IT** | Licensed, local, and accountable for their work. |

**THE STEEL SEPTIC DIFFERENCE**

That's the standard we hold ourselves to on every call. When you're ready, Steel Septic answers the phone.

ABOUT US

# BUILT ON STRENGTH. BUILT FOR TRUST.

Steel Septic and Environmental is a locally owned septic company serving the greater Phoenix Valley. We're Phoenix-based — we live here, we work here, and your neighbors are the ones running your septic service.

Our founder, Bobby Lanham, has spent 35+ years in the septic industry — building, running, and mastering every layer of the operation, from the dirt and diagnostics to the equipment and crews. In Arizona, septic isn't simple: soil, system types, and failure patterns vary dramatically from one area to the next. That kind of knowledge only comes from decades in the field.

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| **WE ANSWER** | When something goes wrong, you talk to a real person. |
| **DONE RIGHT** | No shortcuts, no corners cut — the first time. |
| **HONEST WORK** | No games, no upsells — just the work. |

STRENGTH · RELIABILITY · SAFETY

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**STEELSEPTIC.COM**

SCAN TO VISIT