

# BROOKS COMMUNITY SERVICE DISTRICT

## Septic Tank Effluent Pumping “STEP” Systems



Marion County Public Works wants to help you to become more familiar with your septic system. This newsletter will provide some helpful hints and tips to keep your STEP system in working order.

The septic tank on your property is actually owned, maintained, and repaired by the District. Property owners are, however, responsible for any plumbing infrastructure maintenance leading from the house or building to the connection of the tank. Maintenance of, from the tank to the mainline, will be serviced and maintained by District operators.

Maintenance will be done during normal working hours, except in the event of an emergency. Please ensure that our District operators are able to reach your septic tank and meter.

District operators will read meters at least once every two months to gain information about your usage. At that time, a wastewater operator will inspect the tank for any maintenance issues or pumping needs.



The Brooks Community Service District will generally pump your tank only once every five to ten years, unless otherwise needed.



### What is a STEP system?

“STEP” stands for Septic Tank Effluent Pumping.

### How does a STEP system work?

A STEP system is a septic tank that works in conjunction with a pump to push sewage away from your business or home towards a tank where the effluent is separated and pumped by way of gravity to a mainline which delivers it to the public sewage system. The solids remain in the septic tank to further break down naturally before being transferred out as effluent.

### What does “Effluent” mean?

Effluent is liquid waste or sewage that is discharged.



## Some helpful ways to save:

### USE WATER EFFICIENTLY:

The greater the amount of water used means more water enters the STEP system, which ultimately leads to a larger bill. Minimize use where possible. Here are some tips to save water:

- Fill the bathtub with only as much as you need
- Take shorter showers
- Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth
- Use the dishwasher or clothes washer only when they are full
- Install faucet aerators and flow restrictors in your kitchen and bathroom
- Flush responsibly
- Minimize the use of garbage disposals

Keep excess rainwater from entering the system by looking for rain drains that flow in the direction of your STEP system. Additional water that enters the system increases cost and the overall volume of wastewater to be processed at the treatment plant.

### TIPS TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY SYSTEM:

Garbage - Refrain from flushing items like coffee grounds, eggshells, kitchen fats, oils and greases, hand wipes, paper towels, rags, newspaper, sanitary napkins, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, dental floss, cigarettes, kitty litter, bird seed or other items that can clog and potentially damage your STEP system. Dispose of these items and other trash in your garbage receptacle. If there is a large accumulation of garbage substances inside the tank, that can result in a fine to those items can plug the tank and cause an overflow.



Minimize the use of your garbage disposal as greater use increases the amount of solids entering the system and therefore increases the overall frequency of required maintenance and septic tank pumping.



Chemicals - Flushing of flammable and toxic products is dangerous and illegal. Flushing various household chemicals can be detrimental to the natural occurring bacteria and degradation process within your STEP system. Do not flush:

- Gasoline
- Oil
- Pesticides
- Antifreeze
- Paint or paint removers
- Other household chemicals

These items can be taken to the Marion County Household Hazardous Waste Facility located at 3250 Deer Park Dr SE in Salem. Call 503-588-5169 for more information.

Refrain from using additives that claim to enhance the performance or to be beneficial to the system. Some additives can have adverse effects and lead to major damage to other areas in the collective system. If you have questions about which products to use, contact the District office at 503-588-5036.

**GENERAL INFORMATION:**

**PLEASE contact Marion County Public Works Dispatch at 503-588-5304 if the STEP system alarm sounds.**

In the event of a tank issue, an alarm will sound (similar to a household smoke alarm). To silence this alarm, push the illuminated button located directly above the label that reads “PUSH TO SILENCE” on the electrical control panel. In an event of an emergency where the alarm is ringing, please refrain from using water to drain. If there is a power outage, please do not use any water at all until power can be restored to your septic tank to prevent messy overflows.”

**NEVER shut off your circuit breakers** and familiarize yourself with the location of your electrical control panel and which breaker supplies the power to the pump to avoid accidentally turning it off which could result in an overflow of sewage in your tank. Take note of the number on the panel associated with the septic tank. Refer to this number when reporting a malfunction or issue in the system to the District office so that maintenance operators can identify which unit has the problem. Contact the District office for assistance. If you do shut off your circuit breaker may cause an overflow impacting other homes (inside or outside).

**NEVER** tamper with your septic system. Never remove the access lid or enter your tank. If you see that the lid has been damaged or removed, contact the District office immediately. The septic discharge environment can generate toxic gases that can cause illness or can be potentially fatal. Any tank maintenance work should be done by specialized District personnel.

**NEVER** drive over your septic tank or riser as damage can result. This type of damage may be chargeable to the property owner of record. If your tank is in an area subject to possible traffic, consider putting up an attractive barricade or row of shrubs to discourage traffic unless the tank has been equipped with a special traffic rated lid. FYI: A riser is a pipe that runs vertically from the pump-out openings or access ports at the top of a septic tank near ground level.

**NEVER** construct a new drain field, cesspool (an underground container to temporarily store liquid waste or sewage) or privy (outhouse, etc.). To hook up a new sewer system, consult the District Engineer at 503-588-5036.

**NEVER** hook-up to or tamper with a pressure main as the sewer mainlines are under high pressure and can pose risk or danger.

**VANDALISM:** Please report any acts of vandalism to Marion County Public Works Dispatch at 503-588-5304.

**DIGGING:** Before you dig, call the “One Call” hotline at 1-800-332-2344 (or 811) to have utility service providers with underground infrastructure or facilities in the area come mark their lines. These buried facilities are located under sidewalks, roads, or even in your yard. By calling, you minimize the chances of accidental damage to the lines and potential damage to private property and even personal injury. Our lines might look like irrigation lines, so be cautious before digging!

All legal matters, monthly sewer charges and assessment payments are the obligation and responsibility of the property owner of record. Please contact the District office for any change in property ownership or tenant.

<b>PHONE NUMBERS:</b>	
Brooks Community District Office:	503-588-5036
Marion County Public Works Dispatch:	503-588-5034
Household Hazardous Waste Hotline:	503-588-5169
“One Call” Digging Hotline:	1-800-332-2344

We thank you for your cooperation!!