



Septic System Care Guide

At the San Juan Watershed Group, we are committed to improving water quality in our community. We have worked with the New Mexico Environment Department to test for bacteria and nutrients over the past decade and found that most of the Animas River and San Juan River do not meet water quality standards. One of the most common bacterial contamination sources is from humans.

Failing septic systems discharge untreated waste directly into the environment, reducing water quality, and posing health risks to humans and animals. If you have a septic system proper use and regular maintenance will reduce the risk of failure and will save you money.

Septic Smart Tips

- Have your system inspected every three years by a qualified professional to ensure the system is flowing smoothly.
- Have your septic tank pumped every three to five years, depending on how much water you use, to avoid clogged and dysfunctional systems.
- Every septic system is required to hold a permit with the New Mexico Environment Department. Cesspools have been illegal since 1973, and if you have a cesspool you will need to modify your system and bring it to current standards.



Photo Credit: Pasadena Septic Pumping



Photo Credit: SepticTankProblems.com

- Don't drive or park cars and heavy vehicles on any part of your septic system. Doing so can compact the soil in your drain field or damage pipes, tank, or other septic system components.
- Limit plants and vegetation near the system to ensure roots do not block pipes or damage the drain field.

Visit These Resources for More Information

Learn about septic systems and being septic smart: www.epa.gov/septic

New Mexico permitting and professional services: www.env.nm.gov/liquid_waste

The history and projects of the San Juan Watershed Group: www.sanjuanswcd.com/watershed



Septic System Care Guide

- Your septic system contains a collection of living organisms that digest and treat household waste. Avoid pouring hazardous waste or harsh products (e.g. oils, grease, chemicals, paint, medications) down the drain that could kill those beneficial bacteria.
- Discard non-degradable items in the trash (e.g., floss, disposable wipes, cat litter, feminine hygiene products) instead of flushing them to avoid clogging the system.
- Use water efficient fixtures. Make sure to use toilet tank fill valves with a Leak Sentry to avoid water leakage and overloading the system.

By keeping our septic systems functional and following septage dumping laws, we keep our precious water clean and healthy!

REPORT ILLEGAL DUMPING



Photo Credit: env.nm.gov

Septic waste must be properly disposed of at the **Farmington Wastewater Treatment Plant**. If you see anyone disposing in arroyos, drainage ditches, or other locations, note the location and license plate with a photo or video.

Report illegal dumping to the **New Mexico Environment Department Farmington Field Office**

505-566-9741

The Flow and Treatment of Septic Waste



Photo Credit: epa.gov

Conventional Septic System

Please note: Septic systems vary. Diagram is not to scale.

Visit These Resources for More Information

Learn about septic systems and being septic smart: www.epa.gov/septic

New Mexico permitting and professional services: www.env.nm.gov/liquid_waste

The history and projects of the San Juan Watershed Group: www.sanjuanswcd.com/watershed