



NEWSLETTER

Gunnell Engineering Ltd.

SepticDesign.ca

Volume X Issue I

COVID - 19 and Septic Systems

The unexpected COVID-19 crisis has contributed to many changes in our everyday lifestyle. From schools being closed, working from home, self-isolating and quarantines, domestic water usage has increased from additional laundry, personal uses, food preparation and kitchen use. With individuals and families doing their part by staying home, many septic systems are receiving an increase in wastewater. These increased surges of wastewater into the septic system, can either cause an overflow and /or disturb the balance of your septic system.

There are limits to the amount of wastewater that septic systems can treat. For every litre of wastewater entering the septic tank, one litre of effluent is discharged out into the septic field. In some instances, too much wastewater may lead to a backup into your house or overload your septic field, resulting in a sewage breakout in your yard. Large volumes of wastewater in short periods of time may not allow solids enough time to settle, which can be carried out to the septic field, ultimately clogging the distribution pipes.

Older septic systems are the most sensitive to overuse as they are often undersized, based on current Ontario Building Code standards, and we now have higher spring time groundwater elevations.

In addition to increased usage, consumers are flushing products that should never make their way into their septic system. Sewage systems are

built to handle human waste, including toilet paper. With toilet paper in low supply and cleaning in high gear, many people are disposing the disinfectant wipes, paper towels and other paper products (napkins, baby wipes, facial tissue) into the toilet. All such products should be discarded into your garbage container.

While following the recommendations to disinfect and sterilize frequently touched surfaces, families are using higher than normal amounts of chemicals such as bleach to clean. Disinfectant can also kill off beneficial bacteria in septic systems and leave your wastewater untreated. Improper materials and excessive use can lead to clogs, blockages and wastewater equipment damage – all of which can shut down your septic system. This could even require you and your family to have to leave your home – an especially complicated scenario in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Is there anything we can do to reduce this increased stress on our septic system?

Limit laundry use by spacing out loads and wash large loads only. Spread out washing machine cycles over a week instead of doing all the family's laundry in one day, and take shorter showers. All water conservation efforts reduce the strain on your septic system.

Flush only human waste and toilet paper down the toilet. All non-biodegradable material settles in the septic tank, providing less space for wastewater. Wastewater needs time in

the septic tank to enable initial treatment and the breakdown of the sewage. As a result, the septic tank is regularly full of waste materials and needs extra space to take in more while biodegrading what's already there. The more non-biodegradable material in the septic tank, the further potential there is for sewage back-ups. Flush only natural waste and toilet paper into your septic tank.

Reduce the use of disinfectants and bleach. Detergent and other phosphates act as fertilizer to algae that grow in septic systems. Too much algal growth blocks filters in the distribution pipes of your septic field, and can lead to a backup. Make sure to not over use detergents in your washing machine, and only use liquid or gel soaps in your dishwasher - they are phosphate free. Use as many septic system friendly cleaning products as possible.

We urge homeowners to remember that toilets are not trash cans. There is never a good time for a toilet to backup in your home, especially now when we are being quarantined and self-isolating due to COVID-19, nobody wants a situation that would lead to substantial repairs / upgrades or force you out of your home.

#staysafe #toiletsarenotrashcans

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
What you need to know to help you and your family stay healthy

- Wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly and often.
- Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue. Dispose of tissue immediately and wash your hands.
- Keep surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Stay home when you are sick.

If you have symptoms, call TeleHealth Ontario at: 1-866-797-2000 TTY: 1-866-797-0007 Or contact your public health unit.

For more information, visit Ontario.ca/coronavirus



DO FLUSH
The following can be flushed down the toilet.

Toilet paper

DO NOT FLUSH
The following cannot go in the toilet as they can clog pipes and septic systems.

- Paper towels
- Cigarette butts
- Disposable diapers
- Wipes (Baby or flushable)
- Feminine hygiene products
- Plastics
- Medications (Cotton swabs or balls)
- Cotton
- Dental floss
- Toxic Substances

Dispose these items in the trash.

**Gunnell Engineering Ltd.
SepticDesign.ca**

1110 Stellar Drive
Unit 106
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 7B7

Phone: 905-868-9400
Fax: 905-853-5734
E-mail: info@gunnellengineering.com
Editor: liz@septicdesign.ca