

## Hay Lake Lodge Townhomes Association

# Septic System Guidelines

Updated October 25, 2021

**Septic systems** consist of two major components the tank and the drain field.

**The purpose of the tank** is to collect all solids and liquids from toilets and drains. The solids sink to the bottom of the tank and decompose with their natural bacteria into a sludge. The liquids rise to the top and flow into the drain field. Tank sludge is pumped at regular intervals to prevent the tank from overflowing and introducing solids into the drain field.

**The drain field** consists of a series of distribution tubes containing hundreds of weep holes, distributing the liquids into layers of gravel and sand, then into the soil. While septic tanks almost never fail, drain fields are vulnerable if solids of any sort are introduced and the weep holes become plugged. Proper drainage is then inhibited, and backups or total system failure can occur. A non-functional drain field cannot be repaired and must be relocated at high expense.

**To ensure the Association septic systems operate properly and continues a long service life, please follow these guidelines.**

1. **No food, garbage, paper, oil, or fats in toilets or drains.** This includes coffee grounds, oatmeal, or any other food preparation by-product.
2. **No sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms, disposable diapers, baby or personal care wipes, paper towels, or cigarette butts should be flushed down toilets.** Only toilet paper is acceptable in toilets. In addition, try to limit the amount of hair entering the toilet.
3. **Use liquid laundry and dish washing detergents in sparing amounts.** No bleach or products containing bleach should be used with the septic system.
4. **Avoid running large amounts of water into the septic system over a short period of time.** Space out showers and laundry loads. Running too much water through the system can cause a disruption in the normal settling process within the tank and result in solids flowing into the drain field.
5. **Avoid “every flush” toilet bowl disinfectants, and other anti-bacterial products,** as they kill naturally occurring good bacteria necessary for proper septic tank function.
6. **Use toilet bowl cleaner sparingly.** Do not use cleaning products containing bleach.
7. **Garbage disposals are not allowed in the Association.**
8. **Do not place hazardous materials, chemicals, or paint of any kind in toilets or drains.**
9. **Do not dispose of unwanted medications in toilets or drains.**
10. **Consider installing a lint trap in the washing machine discharge hose.** Lint can be a major contributor to drain field failure.

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## Winter Septic System Freeze Precautions

Septic system freezing can occur in extremely cold weather, especially when there is little ground snow cover. A freeze up is seldom harmful to the septic system, but it can cause sewer backups in your townhome.

### To help avoid septic system freeze ups:

1. **During the winter months** everyone should stay off the entire lakeside yard to avoid packing down the snow. Snow that has been packed down has a much lower insulating property to help protect the septic system.
2. **Make sure there are no leaking faucets or toilets trickling water** in your townhome. As this scenario will tend to freeze the system. See the Winter Tips document for instructions on detecting leaking toilets.
3. **Consider using exterior insulating cement blankets** on the ground near your sewer lines to help prevent sewer line freeze ups. The area where sewer lines exit the building is the most susceptible, as often there is insufficient snow cover in these areas.

## Additional Information

More information on the care of septic systems and septic freeze-up remedies can be found on the University of Minnesota website at: <http://septic.umn.edu>