

## What to Do When Flood Waters Have Affected Your Septic System

If the soil around your home and septic system is water logged or covered with flood waters, your septic system will not work. Avoid using toilets, sinks, dishwashers, garbage disposals, or laundry during this time to prevent further damage and backup into your home.

- Ensure all septic tank lids and maintenance covers are still in place to prevent anyone from falling into the tank.
- Contact a licensed sewage installer to have your septic system checked for potential damage caused by flood water.

### Signs that indicate your septic system has been damaged by flood waters include:

- settling and/or sinking of the soil around your septic tank or leaching bed
- depressions in the soil around your septic tank and leaching bed
- water fixtures such as sinks and tubs draining slowly or not at all
- toilets draining very slowly or making strange sounds when you flush them
- water backing up into your basement through the floor drain
- sewage ponding on the ground on top of and around the leaching bed

### DO NOT USE YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM IF YOU THINK IT HAS BEEN DAMAGED

Flood water may deposit silt or debris in the septic tank and pump chamber (if you have one) which will need to be removed. **ONLY A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL SHOULD ATTEMPT THIS WORK**, as septic tanks contain dangerous gases and specialized personal protective equipment is required.

If the leaching bed is clogged by silt and solids from the tank, a new tile bed may have to be installed. Check with a licensed sewage installer.

### Additional actions to take:

- Ensure your roof downspouts are directing water away from the septic field.
  - Do not pump flood water from your basement into sinks or toilets.
  - Ensure your basement sump pump is **not** going into the septic system.
  - **DO NOT** pump out your septic tank when the soil around the tank or the leaching bed is still saturated with water. High ground water levels may cause an empty septic tank to float and break out of the ground, and damage the tank and connecting plumbing.
  - If your system has electrical components such as a pump or alarm ensure all electrical components are checked prior to connecting to an electrical supply.
  - Do NOT use your septic system until it has been checked to ensure it hasn't been damaged and the level of flood water on the tile bed has receded to below the water level around the house.
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## Protect your Septic System from Further Damage

- Work should be delayed until the soil is no longer saturated to prevent compaction.
- Do not have machinery on the tile bed as wet soil compacts quickly.
- Do not place dumpsters or discarded materials from the clean up on the tile bed.

## References:

<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/flood/home/what-to-do-with-flooded-septic-systems-1>



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