



Your sewage – Your river



Important information for households with **septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants**

What are septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants?

If your home is not connected to the mains sewage system, your toilets, bath, showers, sinks and washing machine will drain into one of the following:

- **A CESSPIT / CESSPOOL** - the oldest system where raw sewage is stored in a tank without being treated. There is no outlet.
- **A SEPTIC TANK** - an underground tank (usually glass reinforced plastic, but older tanks can be brick or concrete) where solids sink to the bottom forming sludge and liquid flows from the top into a drainage field (usually a grid of underground pipes) where bacteria treat it as it soaks away. This is the most common system in the UK.
- **A SMALL SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT** – works like a septic tank but uses electricity to aerate the bacteria. They are better at treating waste, so they can discharge treated sewage into a drainage field or directly into flowing water. Most new installations in recent years have been sewage treatment plants.

ALL THESE TANKS NEED TO BE EMPTIED REGULARLY!

What are the rules?

1. **Have your system emptied by a registered waste carrier at least every 2 years and preferably every year** (some modern sewage treatment plants can be emptied less often). Ask the people emptying your tank for further advice on your particular tank.
2. If you discharge over 2,000 litres of treated sewage per day into the ground or 5,000 litres to flowing water, you need a permit. Calculate how much your discharges at www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules
3. **If you install a new system**, contact the Environment Agency to see if you need a permit. New systems must meet British Standard 12566
4. **If you sell your property**, tell the buyer in writing that it has a cesspit, septic tank or small sewage treatment plant

5 Tips to save you money and keep our river clean...

Faulty and overflowing cesspits, septic tanks and treatment plants cause serious river pollution. Looking after your tank or treatment plant will keep our river cleaner and safer and save you money in the long run. **If you have a holiday let, please make sure visitors/staff/cleaners know these tips:**

1. **Don't put fats, cooking oils, paint, bleach or harsh chemicals down the drain or down your toilet** – they kill bacteria that break down the waste.
2. **Use phosphate-free cleaners and detergents** that say they are suitable for septic tanks (products like Ecover, Magnum from Aldi, Bio-D, Method and Ecozone are worth considering.)
3. **Check for signs of pollution** like sewage smells, pools of water, sludge, foam, lush weeds or grey fungus around your tank and in nearby streams/ditches. If you spot any of these, call a specialist for help.
4. **Don't flush sanitary towels or other sanitary items**, nappies, 'flushable' wipes or similar objects down the toilet as they can block the system
5. **Make a note when you have your tank emptied** and set a reminder for a year later. Only use a registered waste carrier (check online).

**For more information visit
www.charvalley.org/sewage**

CVPC

Char Valley Parish Council