



Frequently Asked Questions about Septage

What is septage?

Septage is the liquid and solid material periodically removed from household septic tanks. Septage is from 96 percent to 99 percent water and low in heavy metals, nitrogen, and phosphorus. About 16,400 households in Mahoning County rely on septic tanks for wastewater treatment. These household sewage treatment systems must be pumped periodically to make sure they function properly. Federal regulations allow for disposal of septage in municipal wastewater treatment plants or for recycling through land application to farm fields. The organic matter in septage makes it valuable as a crop fertilizer and soil conditioner for reclaiming stripped or eroded soils. Materials pumped from commercial and industrial wastewater treatment systems are not considered septage and must be transported to municipal wastewater treatment plants.

How is septage disposed of or recycled?

Septic pumpers removed 2,186,430 gallons of septage from 1,636 sewage treatment systems in Mahoning County in 2010, or about 1,336 gallons from each system. These pumpers transported 1,372,370 gallons of this septage to municipal wastewater treatment plants in Struthers, Warren, Alliance, Elkton, and West Pittsburgh. The remainder was land applied in Mahoning and Columbiana Counties. Eight sites were approved for land application in Mahoning County; 542,200 gallons of septage were applied to these sites in 2010:

| <u>Location</u> | <u>Amount (gallons)</u> |
|---|-------------------------|
| 10310 Seacrist Rd., Smith Twp. | 107,700 |
| 945 Johnson Road, Smith Twp. | 95,750 |
| 9435 N. 12 th Street, Smith Twp. | 105,900 |
| 11424 Beloit-Snodes Road, Smith Twp. | 77,500 |
| 9280 Seacrist Road., Goshen Twp. | 83,300 |
| 11799 Akron-Canfield Road, Ellsworth Twp. | 79,050 |

What are the health and safety standards for land application of septage?

Ohio health districts enforce U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations governing the land application of septage. These regulations require that septage be treated with lime (bringing the pH to 12 for a minimum of 30 minutes) before land application to kill bacteria and viruses, reduce odors, and control vectors. Land applicers must adhere to these isolation distances from streams, lakes, ponds, and drinking water sources:

- Field drainage swales, wet weather and intermittent streams – 33 feet
- Lakes, ponds, rivers, creeks – 500 feet
- Occupied dwellings – 500 feet
- Wells and cisterns – 500 feet
- Property lines, road – 50 feet

Federal regulations also limit the volume of land applied septage to the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus required for what is being grown on the site. Crop harvesting restrictions are imposed on sites planted with crops for animal or human consumption. District Board of Health sanitarians test all sites annually prior to the growing season to measure soil nutrient levels. Land application is prohibited when the soil is saturated with moisture or on frozen ground with steep slopes. Non-biodegradable materials must be removed from septage before it is land applied. The septage must also be land applied uniformly to prevent pooling and runoff.

How can I learn more about septage management in Ohio?

Septage Management in Ohio. Ohio State University Extension Bulletin 854.
<http://ohioline.osu.edu/b854/>

Domestic Septage Regulations and Inspection Guidance: A Guide to the EPA 503 Rule.
<http://www.epa.gov/region6/gen/w/sludge/domestic-septage-regulations-and-inspection-guidance.pdf>.

Mahoning County General Health District Regulation of Servicing and Disposal of Septage.
http://www.mahoninghealth.org/Portals/MCBOH/Uploaded_Documents/septage%20regulations%2010-2004.pdf.

50 Westchester Drive
Youngstown, Ohio 44515
330-270-2855
www.mahoninghealth.org