



A Homeowner's Guide to Septic Tank Effluent Pumping (STEP) Systems

Your STEP System is our responsibility

STEP stands for Septic Tank Effluent Pumping. The STEP system on your property is owned by Town of Atoka. An easement is in place that allows the Town access to perform maintenance and repairs of the STEP system. The Town will always attempt to notify property owners before conducting any work on their property.

How does a STEP System work?

The STEP System includes a septic tank and a pump. Wastewater is conveyed by gravity to the tank through your building plumbing line. Once the wastewater reaches the tank, maintenance is provided by the Town – any issues between your home and the tank is the responsibility of the homeowner. Liquid wastewater is pumped under pressure to the public sewer system. Solid waste will remain in the STEP tank where it naturally degrades and is eventually pumped out.

STEP system pumps typically turn on every few hours with normal water use.

Town staff will inspect your tank at least every 5 years and will pump out the solids every 10 years as needed. If you suspect that your tank may need maintenance, please give us a call. We will be glad to inspect your tank if you have concerns.

Top four ways to keep your STEP system working well:

1. **DO** call the Town at (901) 837-5300 if you hear or see the alarm go off. Our team is on-call around the clock to handle emergency situations. When calling Town Hall after-hours, select the "Public Works Emergency" option to be connected to our on-call staff member.
2. **DO** let Town personnel repair and maintain the system. Don't try to do it yourself.
3. **DON'T** flush or dump trash or grease into your system and limit sink garbage disposal use.
4. **DON'T** dispose of toxic or flammable material into the system.

Town of Atoka, Tennessee

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Phone (901) 837-5300

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How to care for your STEP system

Save Water, Save Money

Minimizing water use saves money in terms of electricity and water cost and will decrease sewer treatment costs for all.

You can help minimize water use by using more efficient practices such as:

- Fill the bathtub with only as much water as you need.
- Turn off faucets while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Turn on the dishwasher and/or clothes washer only when they're full.
- Flush only sanitary waste (not kitty litter, diapers, or other trash).
- Make sure all faucets are completely turned off when not in use.
- Install aerators on the faucets in your kitchen and bathroom.

Use water efficiently

Average indoor water use in the typical single-family home is almost 250 gallons per day. Dripping faucets can waste as much as 2,000 gallons of water each year and leaky toilets can waste as much as 200 gallons each day. The more water a household conserves, the less water enters the STEP system.



Flush responsibly

Be careful with undesirable substances that could be flushed into the sewer. Never flush dental floss, fats, oils or grease (FOG), feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, wipes, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, cat litter, or other items that can clog and potentially damage your STEP system. These items should be disposed of in your garbage can.

Flushing household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, anti-freeze, and paint can stress or destroy the biological treatment taking place in the system. These items should be taken to the appropriate local hazardous materials handling or recycling station.

Minimize use of garbage disposals

Using your garbage disposal increases the amount of solids entering the septic tank and thus the frequency of required maintenance visits to pump the solids from the tank. More maintenance means higher costs for everyone..



Keep excess rainwater out of the system

Watch out for rain drains or storm drains that may flow in the direction of the STEP sewer system. Additional water increases pumping costs, depletes the available capacity of the sewer system, adds needlessly to the daily volume of the water that the treatment plant must process, and increases costs for everyone.

Additives may cause damage

Contact the Town prior to adding any additives to the STEP system. Special additives that claim to enhance the performance of a typical septic tank usually don't and may cause major damage to the other parts of the sewer system. The natural bacteria that form in your system are sufficient. If you are concerned about your STEP system, call the Town to request an inspection.

Report vandalism to the Town

We want to make sure that any vandalism hasn't caused some underlying malfunction to the system that may not be immediately apparent.

Know your responsibilities

Label your circuit breakers

Know which circuit breaker in your house supplies power to your STEP pump. Label it so that you don't accidentally turn it off causing sewage to overflow from the tank. It is your responsibility to provide electric power to the STEP system.

Know the location of your service panel

Be aware of the location of the grey electrical service control panel outside of your building, but don't tamper with it! If a problem occurs, call the Town at (901) 837-5300.

Maintain your own plumbing

You are responsible for maintaining the plumbing that connects to the STEP tank. Town maintenance personnel will service and maintain all equipment except the plumbing within the house and the sewer line from the house to the tank.

Know what to do in case of a power failure

If a power outage occurs, it is not necessary to call the Town. Your system is designed to work normally once power returns. Your tank has capacity for approximately 24 hours of limited use in a power outage (e.g. toilets, sinks, showers). If your electric power provider cannot restore power within 24 hours, contact the Town for further assistance.

