

# Fisherman Bay Sewer District

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## DO'S AND DON'TS FOR OPERATING YOUR ON-SITE SEPTIC SYSTEM

To keep the District's system healthy and functioning well, we provide the following information to help members make correct decisions about disposal into their septic tanks. Please share this information with your tenants or guests.

### DOs

- Familiarize yourself with the location of the septic system electrical control panel. If the alarm rings:
  - ❖ Call \_\_\_\_\_ immediately and leave a message if necessary. The audible alarm can be silenced by pushing the lighted button on the front (or bottom on older systems) of the control panel.
  - ❖ Leave power to the septic system on.
  - ❖ Reduce water use in an alarm situation. With minimum use, the tank has a reserve storage capacity for 24 hours before ponding or backup.
- Collect grease for disposal in the trash.
- Use trash can or compost bin for disposal of food scraps instead of a garbage disposal.
- Choose liquid detergents without chlorine or phosphates or use soap flakes with washing soda (more caustic than baking soda).
- Repair leaky plumbing fixtures.
- Insulate or drain plumbing to protect from freezing.
- Conserve water: take shorter showers, use less bath water, wash full loads of clothes or dishes, and use water saving fixtures.
- Use environmentally friendly household products: Ecover, Oasis, Seventh Generation, Earth Friendly, Biokleen, Lifetree, and Planet.
- Use dryer sheet type fabric softeners (or use liquid softeners on a washcloth in your dryer).
- Use landfill to dispose of personal hygiene products, pharmaceuticals, kitty litter, coffee grounds, wrappers, dental floss and large amounts of hair.
- Use hazardous waste collections for paint, thinners, pesticides, herbicides and any other toxic materials.

### DON'Ts

- Do not use excessive quantities of water, e.g. consecutive loads of laundry or keeping the sink running while washing hands, teeth, rinsing dishes or vegetables. Large amounts of water flowing into a septic tank over a short period reduces its ability to breakdown and settle solids and can clog your pump.
- Do not use septic tank additives. They are NOT necessary and can harm the septic tank microbiological process.
- Do not use Drano: twelve (12) grams will kill all the bacteria in a 1,000 gallon tank!
- Do not use liquid fabric softeners in the wash.
- Do not flush or drain dangerous or damaging substances including pharmaceuticals, water softener backwash, excessive amounts of bath or body oils or hair, flammable or toxic products, floor wax and rug cleaners, spa products, pesticides, herbicides, paints, thinners, etc.

- Do not leave water running to prevent freeze damage.
- Do not turn off your septic system at the control panel or at your electrical panel when your home or business is vacant. The system may need to operate to discharge accumulated ground water or plumbing seepage. Inspection, maintenance, or repair also require the system to be powered.

**NOTE:** In a power outage, do not flush your toilet. Continued use of water without power will overflow the tank or cause backups.

## **SUBSTITUTES FOR HAZARDOUS HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS**

The hazardous cleaners are listed in bold face, followed by the suggested friendly substitute.

If you don't want to make your own, many "friendlier" substitute products are available from companies like Ecover, Oasis, Seventh Generation, Earth Friendly, Biokleen, Lifetree, and Planet.

**AMMONIA-BASED CLEANERS:** Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge. For windows, combine a solution of 2 Tbs. white vinegar in 1 quart water in a spray bottle.

**DISINFECTANTS OR DEODORIZERS:** Use ½ cup borax in a gallon of water.

**DRAIN DECLOGGERS:** Use a plunger or metal snake or remove and clean trap.

**SCOURING CLEANSERS & POWDERS:** Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge or add 4 Tbs. baking soda to 1 quart warm water or use Bon Ami. It's cheaper and won't scratch.

**CARPET/UPHOLSTERY CLEANERS:** Sprinkle dry cornstarch or baking soda on the rug or furniture, then vacuum. For tougher stains, blot with white vinegar in soapy water.

**TOILET CLEANERS:** Sprinkle baking soda or Bon Ami into toilet bowl and scrub with a toilet brush.

**FURNITURE/FLOOR POLISHES:** To clean and polish, mix 1 cup olive oil with ½ cup white vinegar in a spray bottle. Spray on a soft cloth and work it in with the grain. Buff with a soft, dry cloth.

### **METAL CLEANERS:**

- ❖ Brass and copper: scrub with a used half lemon dipped in salt.
- ❖ Stainless steel: use scouring pad and soapy water.
- ❖ Silver: rub gently with toothpaste and soft wet cloth.

**OVEN CLEANERS:** Quickly sprinkle salt on drips, then scrub. Use baking soda and scouring pads on older spills.

**LAUNDRY DETERGENT:** Choose a detergent with zero phosphate content or use soap flakes with 1/3 cup of washing soda (more caustic than baking soda). Before switching, wash clothes in pure washing soda to remove detergent residues. Use liquid instead of powdered detergents.

**DISPOSAL OF PHARMACEUTICALS** is best accomplished by adding water to pills or capsules in their original containers with labels removed and by adding flour or cat litter to liquids. The containers then can be bagged or put in plastic tubs for disposal as landfill. These

procedures are an alternative to flushing which is very harmful to our sewer system and the environment. Many medications are not broken down in the biological treatment process and pass through to surface and ground waters as toxic waste.