

Guidance on Septic Repairs

Your septic system can pose a public health risk after a flood or storm because of sewage back up, dangerous gases or contaminated wastewater. It is important to keep your family, especially children and pets, away from areas affected by sewage or wastewater to reduce the risk of communicable disease.

Follow these steps to protect your septic system and your health:

1. Do not use the septic system until the water over the septic system and the drain field area is no longer evident on the ground surface.
2. If the system is damaged and in need of repair, contact your local health department. Signs of damage include:
 - a. Soil around tanks and in the disposal field area
 - b. Wastewater system components have shifted or floated to the ground surface
 - c. System not accepting wastewater, such as sewage backup or sewage surfacing on the top of the ground
3. Have your septic system inspected by a [certified wastewater system inspector](#).
 - a. Examine the electrical system, including connection, pumps, alarms, etc. for damage before restoring power to the system.
 - b. Clean the effluent filter/screen.
 - c. The system may need to be pumped out to remove solids, sediment or debris. Pump both chambers.
 - d. Make sure tank access covers are in place and secure. Check system inspection or sampling ports for damage or blockage.
 - e. Check for erosion at the tank and drain field areas. Replace or repair vegetative cover as needed.
4. Do not compact soil in the drain field areas. Keep vehicles and heavy equipment away from the drain field and do not place equipment, trailers or building materials on the wastewater system area.
5. Allow for the drain field and wastewater system area to dry out from flooding before attempting to make repairs. Watch for unstable ground and sink holes.
6. If you had sewage backup into the facility, use rubber gloves, boots and eye protection to clean and disinfect impacted areas.
7. Do not dump flood waters or disinfectants into the wastewater system.
8. Contact your local health department if the system is damaged and a permit is needed for repair.
9. FEMA assistance is available for systems that were damaged because of Hurricane Helene. Each homeowner should apply for assistance at [disasterassistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov) or by calling 800-621-3362. Two of the key eligibility requirements are that the individual applying owns the home as their primary residence and that the repairs are not covered by the homeowner's insurance. FEMA will request a denial letter from the insurance carrier.

