



# Umatilla County Public Health Environmental Health Division

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## Septic Systems: *What to do after the flood?*

Once floodwaters have receded, there are several things homeowners should remember:

**Whenever the water table is high or your sewage system is threatened by flooding there is a risk that sewage will back up into your home. The only way to reduce this backup is to relieve pressure on the system by using it less.**



 <b>DON'T</b>	 <b>DO</b>
Do not drink well water until it is tested.	Locate any electrical or mechanical devices the system may have that could be flooded to avoid contact with them until they are dry and clean.
Do not use the sewage system until water in the soil absorption field is lower than the water level around the house.	If sewage has backed up into the basement, clean the area and disinfect the floor. Use a chlorine solution of a half cup of chlorine bleach to each gallon of water to disinfect the area thoroughly.
Do not dig into the tank or drainfield area while the soil is still wet or flooded. Avoid compacting the soil over the soil absorption field by driving or operating equipment in the area.	Check the vegetation over your septic tank and soil absorption field. Repair erosion damage and sod or reseed areas as necessary to provide turf grass cover.
Do not pump the tank during flooded or saturated drainfield conditions. Under worst conditions, pumping it out could cause the tank to try to float out of the ground and may damage the inlet and outlet pipes.	Pump the septic system after the flood when the soil is no longer saturated. Be sure to pump both the tank and lift station. This will remove silt and debris that may have washed into the system
Do not dump floodwater in the sink or toilet.	Be sure the septic tank's manhole cover is secure and that inspection ports have not been blocked or damaged.
Do not go into your tank!	Do call a professional for issues regarding your septic system.

For additional information about your septic system please contact UCo Health or visit EPA at:  
<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/septic-systems-what-do-after-flood>