



# **GUADALUPE COUNTY, TEXAS**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

### **Newsletter**

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Director

This Issue:

CODE ENFORCEMENT

DO'S & DON'TS OF OSSF

PUMP YOUR SEPTIC TANK

## **WHAT IS CODE ENFORCEMENT**

Code Enforcement is responsible for investigating environmental hazards, floodplain violations, and unpermitted/un-operational septic systems, within the unincorporated area of Guadalupe County. Code enforcement investigates nuisance violations, unsafe/unsecure buildings, and violations of any fire, health, or public safety concerns. Violations can be on public or private property. Code enforcement also enforces both County orders, local and State laws, but does not enforce deed restrictions or HOA rules.

**Code Enforcements goal is to protect and improve the health and welfare of the residents of Guadalupe County.**

Code Enforcement emphasizes compliance over enforcement. Our personnel seek to first educate the residents about County orders, and State laws to gain voluntary compliance. Notices of Violations (NOV) are part of the educational process but can result in a citation of court action if ignored. Code Enforcement issues include, but are not limited to:

- Public Nuisance
- Illegal Dumping
- On-Site Sewage Systems (OSSF)
- Floodplain Development

**What is considered high grass & weeds:** It means all rank and cultivated vegetable growth or matter that has grown more than 36 inches in height. High grass & weeds pose fire dangers, promote mosquitos that can pass on diseases, also stop the natural flow of water that could cause drainage issues. In addition, high grass & weeds become grounds for harboring rats, mice, and snakes. (Health & Safety Code 343)



**What is a Public Nuisance:** Public nuisance was a common law offence in which the injury, loss, or damage is suffered by the public, in general, rather than an individual, in particular.

**Please contact this office for floodplain advice on property protection, flood proofing measures and financial assistance**

## DO'S & DON'TS OF OSSF

### ***How can I make sure that my OSSF works properly?***

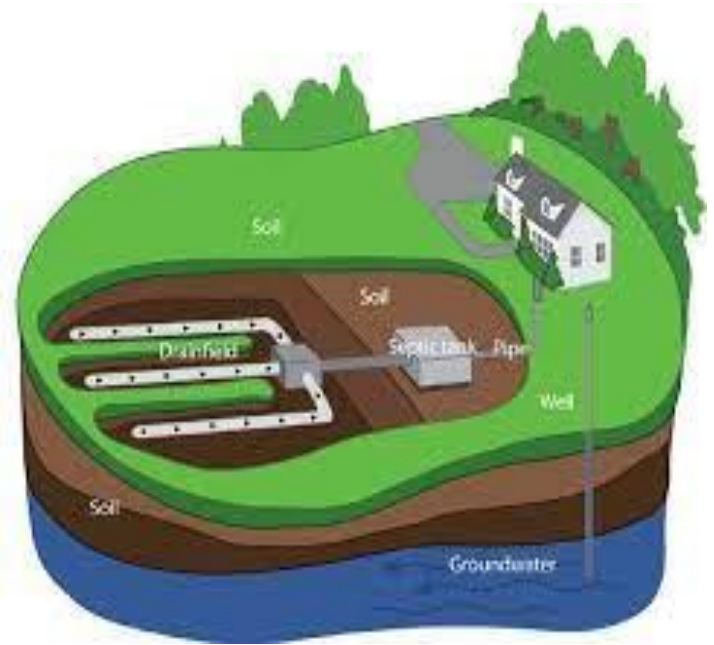
Most Important: Keep in mind that an OSSF is not a city sewer. If an OSSF is treated correctly and fed properly, it will provide efficient service. While operating these "dos and don'ts"

#### **DO:**

- Have the tank pumped and cleaned by a TCEQ registered sludge transporter. Use the table above to determine how often that tank need to be pumped and cleaned.
- Check the toilet for leaks periodically. Use a water-based dye to the flush tank and see if the dye appears in the toilet within 10 minutes (without flushing the toilet).

#### **DON'T:**

- Build over any part of an OSSF. Examples of items not to construct over the system are driveways, barns, storage buildings, sidewalks, and patios.
- Add chemical additives or the so-called enzymes into the OSSF. Some of these additives may even be harmful to the toilet's operation.
- Use the toilet to dispose of cleaning tissues, cigarette butts, or other trash. This disposal will burden the treatment system with an undesirable load of solids.
- Drive or park vehicles over the OSSF.



### **How often should I pump out my septic tank?**

***You should pump your septic tank at least every three to five years.***

This is a good rule for anyone who has just bought a septic tank and lives with a moderately sized family. While this rule does not apply to all septic tanks, it provides a guideline to help measure how much the tank has been used. Pumping frequency normally depends on a number of factors such as the septic tank size, sludge and scum levels of your septic tank, the number of people in the house, and their habits. When you have a septic system installed, wastewater from your house goes to the tank where it separates the waste into sludge (solids), effluent (liquid waste), and scum. Sludge as they are heavier goes to the bottom of the tank where microorganisms and other bacteria's live. They will consume and dissolve the sludge. Scum is lighter and is made up of fats, grease, and oil, which floats at the top. Whereas, the watery effluent middle layer goes to the drainage or leach field where soil works as a filtration system to treat the liquid waste. The problem occurs when too much sludge build-up at the bottom of the tank and bacteria's are not able to break it down. Resulting in an overflow to the drain field. That's why tank pumping is important.

