

Septic System Information, By Marg Fielding Ril Lake Association Water Quality and Septic System Committee

This information was gathered because we are concerned about protecting and maintaining our Ril Lake Water Quality and enhancing the value of our properties.

Four different Septic System Installers were contacted, The following information from their field experiences;

- Septic systems usually last between 20-30 years, This depends on their use, ie if a system was installed years ago for smaller family and now the system is overloaded, it will wear out faster. Often older systems were not meant for families that have grown or bigger demands from renting situations.
- Chemicals suggest that soaps and detergents cause the tanks to break down faster.
- Maintenance is important, if pumped out every 3-5 years the system will last longer, systems that are not regularly maintained will break down faster.
- Keep tile bed clear of trees, structures and vehicles and only short grass on it. Most older tile beds have roots that plug it up.
- Steel tanks are rusted out by 25 years and need replacing.
- Cement tanks may get up to 30 years or so, cement breaks down around the end ballasts, 1 installer said that depending on the age and situation, the cement tank could be repaired with plastic pieces.
- To sell your property, the real estates agents now require current information on the septic system.

All four installers said that signs of trouble are smell, not draining well, pooling by tank, liquid bubbling or grass patches growing on tile bed. If it is 20-25 years old and it is damaged, better to replace the whole system because 1 part may be fixed (ie the tile bed) and be up-to-date however the other part will be failing the next while after.

Information from Steve Watson, Chief Building Official, Building Department, Township of Lake of Bays:

- Septic system inspections were done about 6 years ago at Ril. They are finishing the follow-up on these by next year. The province is reviewing legislation to have mandatory inspection done about every 2-3 years. If this goes ahead, inspections will be downloaded to the municipalities. On July 18, 2007 Mr. Watson was asked for a report on data for making these recommendations. Form the last inspection, they have a data base on all of the systems and how old they are. Depending on the number of order systems and the manpower, they will decide what the criteria for inspections should be ie. 20, 25 years old systems first or 30 years and older etc. Inspection will probably be like the last time general surveying of the tile bed for patchy grass growth or things on the tile beds, spongy ground etc. He gave an example about a complaint about a system. They did a dye test. Red dye was put into the toilet, flushed and then if the surrounding ground was red within 24hours, they knew that there was a leak in the tank.
- Septic Systems need to be pumped out every 3-5 years. The Septic Pumping company can tell the owners if there is a problem with the tank. Mr. Watson said that there may be new provincial legislation coming in the future to enforce reporting of faulty tanks by the pumping person.
- Cement tanks may be fixed with plastic "T" junctions if the fault is on the end ballasts. Owners could possibly get more 10+ years out of the tank. But, if the middle ballast breaks down this is not repairable.
- Paper can eventually plug up the tile beds. New tile beds have a filter to stop the paper and therefore the beds last longer.
- Present Building Code is different from years ago when some of the systems were installed, many tanks were 600 gallons, now sizes are larger depending on use. All Installer are required to obtain a permit.
- Emergency Plan: If your system has a broken line or leaking in the ground, have it pumped out immediately. The tank acts as a holding tank for few days till the System is fix.
- Mr. Watson will come out to speaks to groups like our Docktalk or Association General meetings. He is available to answer any questions. He can be contacted individually or a list of questions is send to him.