

Minden Hills Septic Re- Inspection Program 2026

Starting May 4, 2026

Welcome and thank you for attending this year's information session.

Why Re-inspections Matter

- **Goal:** To identify failing systems before they contaminate groundwater or nearby lakes.
- **Health Protection:** Prevents the spread of waterborne diseases like hepatitis and cholera.
- **Investment Protection:** Regular checks catch small issues before they become \$20,000+ replacement projects.
- **Mandatory vs. Voluntary:** Most programs are mandatory for high-risk areas (near water or wells) and occur every **5 years**.

Types of Septic Systems

- ▶ **Class 1 – Privies:** Used for human waste only with no greywater discharge. Examples include **composting toilets**, outhouses, and portable toilets.
- ▶ **Class 2 – Greywater Systems:** Specifically for "greywater" from sinks, showers, and laundry. It typically uses a leaching pit.
- ▶ **Class 3 – Cesspools:** A pit that receives waste from a Class 1 system. These are generally discouraged because they clog easily and have a **short lifespan**.
- ▶ **Class 4 – Leaching Bed Systems:** The most common type for homes and cottages. These consist of a septic tank and a leaching bed.
- ▶ **Class 5 – Holding Tanks:** A watertight tank with no treatment or discharge. Waste must be **frequently pumped** and removed by a licensed hauler.

How the System Works (The Basics)

- **The Tank:** Separates solids (sludge) and oils (scum) from the liquid effluent.
- **The Leaching Bed:** A network of pipes where liquid effluent seeps into the soil for final biological treatment.
- **Natural Treatment:** Bacteria in the soil and tank break down waste particles naturally.



Step-by-Step Inspection Procedure

- 1. Notice:** You will receive a letter informing you of the upcoming inspection.
- 2. Visual Surface Check:** Inspectors look for surface ponding, sewage odours, or unusually lush grass over the bed.
- 3. Component Check:** Verification of tank lids, baffle condition, and effluent filters.

Surface Assessment

- ▶ A "walkabout" of the entire leaching bed area to check for **pooling effluent**, "spongy" ground, or foul odors.
- ▶ Identification of **encroachments** (e.g., sheds, decks, or pools) built too close to or on top of the system.

Internal Tank Inspection

- ▶ **Lid & Riser Check:** Ensuring lids are **secure, watertight,** and free of cracks.
- ▶ **Baffle Condition:** Checking that the inlet and outlet baffles are intact to prevent **solids from entering** the leaching bed.
- ▶ **Operating Level:** Verifying the liquid is at the correct height (typically at the bottom of the outlet pipe).



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Septic lid uncovered



Clogged Effluent Filter

Measurement Sludge and Scum Levels:

- ▶ **Measurement Sludge Scum Levels:** Measuring waste thickness using specialized "sludge sticks" to determine if a **pump-out is required**.
- ▶ Less than $1/3$ of the tank capacity can be sludge and scum. If there is more than $1/3$, a pump out is required.

Mechanical & Advanced Checks

- ▶ Testing pumps, alarms, and float switches for systems that aren't gravity-fed.
- ▶ Cleaning the effluent filter (a small mesh screen in the tank) to prevent clogs.
- ▶ These filters were introduced into the Building Code in 2006. Any systems installed after this date require a filter.

How You Can Prepare

- **Locate Your Tank:** Find your lids (usually 1.5m/5ft from the house). Use a metal probe or consult your original **Septic Permit**.
- **Clear Access:** Uncover tank lids and remove any heavy objects, planters, or debris.
- **Provide History:** Have your last pump-out receipt (ideally from within the last 3–5 years) ready for the inspector.

Signs of a Failing System

- **Indoor Clues:** Gurgling pipes, slow-moving drains, or sewage backups.
- **Outdoor Clues:**
 - **Ponding:** Foul-smelling standing water near the tank or bed.
 - **Lush Grass:** Isolated patches of extra bright or spongy green grass.
 - **Odours:** Persistent "rotten egg" smells around the yard.

Homeowner "Dos and Don'ts"

- **DO:**

- Pump your tank every **3 to 5 years**.
- Use water efficiently to avoid "hydraulic overloading".
- Clean your **effluent filter** annually.

- **DON'T:**

- Flush "flushable" wipes, grease, or chemicals (paints/solvents).
- Drive or park vehicles on the leaching bed.
- Plant trees or shrubs near the pipes; roots can cause major blockages.

Inspection Outcomes

No Concern: System is operating as intended.

- **Remedial Work:** Minor repairs needed (e.g., replace a cracked lid or clean a filter).
- **Replacement Required:** If the system poses a risk to human health or the environment.
- **Notification:** You will be notified of any deficiencies by email or mail and given a timeframe for correction.

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The central text is positioned in the white space between these green elements.

Septic Maintenance – Myths vs. Facts

Myth #1:

- ▶ "If I don't have problems, I don't need to pump my tank."

Fact: Sludge builds up silently. By the time you notice a "problem" (backup or smell), solids may have already pushed into your leaching bed, causing permanent, expensive damage. Most tanks need pumping every

3 to 5 years.

Myth #2:

- ▶ "I should use additives or 'starters' to keep the bacteria healthy."
- ▶ **Fact:** You don't need them. Your waste provides all the natural bacteria the system requires. Some additives can actually **liquefy solids**, allowing them to float out and clog your tile bed pipes.

Myth #3:

- ▶ "If it says 'Flushable' on the box, it's safe for my septic."
- ▶ **Fact:** "Flushable" wipes do **not** break down like toilet paper. They snag on baffles and pumps, leading to major blockages and emergency repair bills. If it's not "the 3 Ps" (Pee, Poop, and Paper), it goes in the trash.

Myth #4:

- ▶ "I can plant a vegetable garden or small trees over my leaching bed."
- ▶ **Fact:** Roots are the #1 enemy of septic pipes. Even small shrubs can find their way into the perforations and choke the system. Stick to shallow-rooted grasses or wildflowers.

Myth #5:

- ▶ "The more water I use to 'flush the system out,' the better."
- ▶ **Fact:** Excessive water (like doing 5 loads of laundry in one day) causes **hydraulic overload**. This pushes "young" waste out of the tank before it has time to settle, sending solids straight into your leaching bed.

Myth #6:

- ▶ "Bleach and heavy cleaners are fine in small amounts."
- ▶ **Fact:** While a little is okay, excessive use of bleach, drain cleaners, or antibacterial soaps kills the "good" bacteria that treat your waste. Use **septic-friendly** or biodegradable cleaners whenever possible.

Questions