



"Your Local  
Health Department"

## Branch - Hillsdale - St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Septic Smart Week, September 17-21

**Coldwater, MI** – The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is joining the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in kicking off its sixth annual Septic Smart Week to encourage homeowners and communities to properly maintain their septic systems. "With so much recent attention to water in Michigan, it is a great time to think about the water and septic systems in your own home," says Paul Andriacchi, Director of Environmental Health at the Community Health Agency. "People often forget about their septic systems since they typically function on their own without too much upkeep – but residents should always be Septic Smart."

More than 1.3 million homes and businesses in Michigan depend on septic systems to treat wastewater. If not maintained, failing septic systems can contaminate groundwater and harm the environment by releasing bacteria, viruses, and household toxics to local waterways. Proper septic system maintenance protects public health, the environment, and saves the homeowner money by avoiding costly repairs.

Here are a few simple tips for homeowners from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality:

- **Protect It and Inspect It:** Homeowners should generally have their system inspected every three years by a qualified professional or according to their state or local health department's recommendations. Tanks should be pumped when necessary, typically every three to five years.

- **Think at the Sink:** Avoid pouring fats, grease, and solids down the drain. These substances can clog a system's pipes and drainfield.
- **Don't Overload the Commode:** Only put things in the drain or toilet that belong there. For example, coffee grounds, dental floss, disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, cigarette butts, and cat litter can all clog and potentially damage septic systems.
- **Don't Strain Your Drain:** Be water-efficient and spread out water use. Fix plumbing leaks and install faucet aerators and water-efficient products. Spread out laundry and dishwasher loads throughout the day – too much water at once can overload a system that hasn't been pumped recently.
- **Shield Your Field:** Remind guests not to park or drive on a system's drainfield, where the vehicle's weight could damage buried pipes or disrupt underground flow.
- **Pump your Tank:** Routinely pumping your tank can prevent your septic system from premature failure, which can lead to groundwater contamination.
- **Test Your Drinking Water Well:** If septic systems aren't properly maintained, leaks can contaminate well water. Testing your drinking water well is the best way to ensure your well water is free from contaminants.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) or visit your local office.

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