



For immediate release

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Got Septic? Clean Water Campaign Offers Maintenance and Care 101

Septic systems are usually installed in areas where sanitary sewer is not available and where wastewater must be disposed of on the property. There are more than an estimated half a million septic systems, with over 12,000 septic systems being added per year in the 16-county Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District.

To help homeowners better maintain their septic systems, the Clean Water Campaign has partnered with the local County Environmental Health Services to workshops around the District on system maintenance. DeKalb Stormwater will be conducting a workshop in on **April 10** at 7 PM.

At one time, septic systems were thought of as a temporary wastewater treatment solution until sewer lines could be extended; however that is no longer the case. Some portions of the District will never be sewered. Because septic systems will be the permanent wastewater treatment solution for many households, the long-term management of septic systems requires more consideration.

A poorly functioning septic system is a potentially serious cause of water pollution. Stormwater can carry harmful bacteria from failing septic systems into rivers, lakes, streams and groundwater. Like an automobile, a septic system needs periodic maintenance to extend the life of the system and to avoid costly emergency repairs.

A septic tank should be pumped at least every five years. The average cleaning cost is \$350. Emergency repairs may run \$3,500 or more depending on tank capacity. The estimated cost to replace a septic system begins at \$5,000 and can run much higher under special conditions such as proximity to an aquifer, underlying rock or soil composition.

Even the best-designed and maintained system will eventually fail. They cannot be made to last forever, but soil type, water conservation and quality maintenance will determine the life expectancy of any septic tank system.

How do you know if your septic tank is failing? The most obvious evidence is wet areas on your property above the absorption field that have a sewage odor. This may indicate a system needs replacement. Other indicators are water backing up in the house or slow flushing toilets. If you have concerns that your system is having problems, contact a licensed septic tank contractor.

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Four simple ways to care for septic tanks

1. Flush only human waste and toilet paper into septic tanks. Don't use your toilets as a trash can.
2. Avoid flooding your septic tank by fixing leaks. Leaking toilets are a major cause of septic system failure.
3. Have your septic system inspected and pumped at least once every three to five years.
4. Contact your local sewer authority to see if your home can be connected to the sanitary sewer system.

The workshop will be held on **April 10** at 7:00 p.m. at the DeKalb County Cooperative Extension Service Office located at 4380 Memorial Drive, Decatur, GA 30032. There is no charge for the workshops, but registration is required. Register online at www.cleanwatercampaign.com or by calling 404.463.3259.

The Clean Water Campaign works to educate the public about activities that help prevent water pollution. It is a cooperative, multi-agency public education initiative spearheaded by 20 local governments in metro Atlanta and managed by the Atlanta Regional Commission. For more information about the Clean Water Campaign, contact Kelley O'Brien at 404-463-3259.

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