

Why should you look after your sewage treatment system?

Septic tanks. Cesspits. Package sewage treatment plants. Whatever kind of off mains sewage system you have, when it works, they're great. But like anything else, if you don't look after something, it'll fail. It could start to smell, spread disease, pollute local rivers and seas... and nobody wants that.

You have a legal and social responsibility to keep your system in good working order. In January 2015, additional rules came into effect. These set out the conditions and technical requirements specified by the Environment Agency that your system needs to meet in order to be used without an environmental permit to discharge treated sewage.

Savings galore

Good news! If you look after your system, it will need emptying less often so you save money. Regular maintenance costs around £100 to £250 per year. If you don't do this, the cost of repairing or replacing a malfunctioning system or a failed drainage field rockets to anything between £5,000 and £10,000.

Property matters

If you let your system get into an unusable condition, it could easily lower the value of your property. You might not be thinking of moving house next week, but it's still worth keeping on top of it.

Bye bye bacteria

Household wastewater is brimming over with bacteria and viruses, as well as nitrogen and phosphorus. If your system is working well, it will have no problem reducing these pollutants.

If not, you could be churning out untreated sewage, which causes surface water and groundwater contamination. This poses dangers to drinking water – spreading disease in humans and animals – as well as damaging the environment. You could be releasing these bacteria, viruses and toxic chemicals to local streams, rivers, lakes and seas. These could harm people, increasing the chances of infectious diseases such as eye and ear infections, acute gastrointestinal illness and hepatitis. They're also harmful to local wildlife, with pollutants killing native plants, fish, and shellfish.