

How to Prevent Freezing of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

By St. Louis County Environmental Services Department Staff and
SSTS Technical Advisory Committee

Freezing of onsite wastewater systems can be prevented with a combination of appropriate design, installation, and homeowner or commercial owner maintenance. The St. Louis County Environmental Services Staff and Technical Advisory Committee have reviewed many of the means to help prevent freezing of septic systems. The best design, installation, and management practices are:

Design and Installation:

- Insulate the top and sides of all septic and pump tanks
- Insulate all entrances into the septic system including: maintenance covers, inspection pipes, and flush out valves
- Insulate or use insulated pipe for sewer line and pressure lines
- Make sure all lines are installed on-grade with no sags or bellies
- Install extra electrical outlet at tank for heater

Owner Maintenance:

- Use an outside heat source in the septic tank (appropriate style tank heater)
- Cover tanks, lines, and field with straw or insulated blanket by Thanksgiving, if there is no snow on the ground
- Maintain normal water use throughout the year (plan on having a house sitter use sufficient hot water when gone on vacation during the winter)
- Have your service provider identify potential freezing problems with your specific system and suggest additional freezing safeguards