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Useful Septic System Tips

* **PROTECT IT AND INSPECT IT:** Homeowners should generally have their system inspected every three years by a licensed contractor. 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.