

Holding Tanks

K. Mancl and J.A. Moore

A holding tank is one alternative often considered for a lot that is unsuitable for a septic system. A holding tank is a water-tight tank that holds, for example, all the wastewater generated in the home. The wastewater is removed regularly and taken to another site for treatment. A 1,500 gallon tank is the minimum size required in Oregon. For a family of four this size tank would require pumping at least once a week at a cost of \$50 to \$100, equivalent to \$2,600 to \$5,200 a year.

The more water used in the home, the higher the pumping costs. Water conservation measures, even rather expensive systems, can quickly pay for themselves. Regular pumping and proper treatment of this waste must be assured to protect the public health and the environment. Due to the high cost of operation and the need to assure proper pumping and disposal of the waste, the use of holding tanks should only be considered for temporary or emergency use.

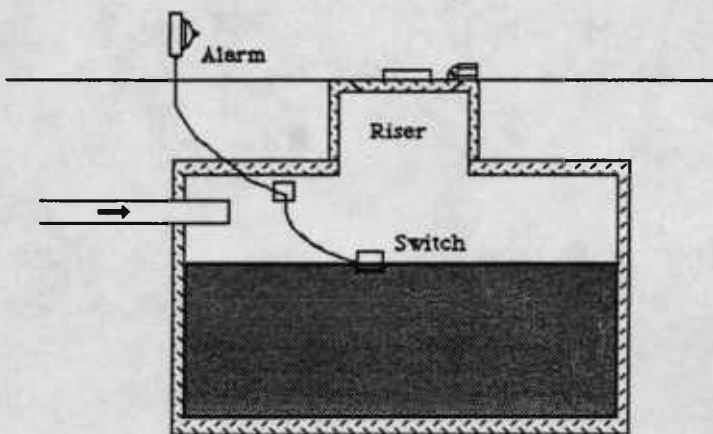
Holding tanks for permanent use are only considered for small industrial or commercial sites with only occasional use (such as a fairgrounds) where:

1. The site must be unsuitable for the use of a standard subsurface treatment system.
2. A community sewer system will not be available for at least 5 years.
3. The sewage flow is less than 200 gallons a day.

Holding tanks can be used to serve residences on a temporary basis if:

1. A community sewer system will be available within 5 years.
2. Weather conditions are delaying the installation of an approved on-site sewage treatment system.
3. The tank is serving a temporary construction site.

Figure 1. CROSS SECTION OF A HOLDING TANK



Karen Mancl, Extension Water Quality Specialist, Ohio State University and James A. Moore, Extension Agricultural Engineer, Oregon State University.



Requirements

A holding tank is at least 1500 gallons in size and built to meet the same construction standards as a septic tank. To prevent the tank from overflowing or backing up it must have a visual and audible alarm that activates when it is 75 percent full.

The tank should be situated so it easy to pump, but it must be protected against access by children. The use of a heavy or locked cover is recommended. If the holding tank is installed in areas with a high water table, the empty tank could float and lift out of the ground, and break the sewer lines. Anchoring the tank, draining the area, or pumping only a portion of the liquid contents prevents these problems.

Permits for holding tanks are issued by the local health department. A copy of a regular pumping contract from a licensed sewage disposal service must accompany the permit application. All holding tanks are inspected by the local health department annually.



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