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POWTS Maintenance FAQs

How do I prevent my septic system from freezing?

You can do many things to prevent your system from freezing in the future. Depending on your system, location, and water use, you may never have a freezing problem. Here are some precautions if you have had a past problem or are concerned about having a future problem. It is not necessary to do all of these, but pick and choose based on your situation.

1. Place a layer of mulch (8-12 inches) over the pipes, tank and soil treatment system to provide extra insulation. This is particularly important if you have had a new system installed late in the year and no vegetative cover has been established. If your system is currently frozen, ignore this step, as it will delay thawing come spring.

2. Let the grass in your lawn get a little longer over the tank and soil absorption cell area in the late summer/fall. This will provide extra insulation and help hold any snow that may fall.

3. Use water; the warmer the better! The Onsite Sewage Treatment Program is usually an advocate of water conservation, but if freezing is a concern, increasing low use to normal water use can help the system. This includes spreading out your laundry schedule to possibly one warm/hot load per day, using your dishwasher and maybe even taking a hot bath. DO NOT leave water running all the time, as this will hydraulically overload the system.

4. If you know you are going to be gone for an extended period, plan accordingly. This could include having someone use sufficient quantities of water in the home regularly, or pumping out your tank before leaving.

5. Fix any leaky plumbing fixtures or appliances in your home. This will help prevent freezing problems and help your system work better year-round.

6. Keep all types of vehicles and high-traffic people activities off of the system. This is a good rule to follow year-round.

7. Make sure all risers, inspection pipes and manholes have covers on them. Sealing them and adding insulation is a good idea.

8. Keep an eye on your system. If any seeping or ponding occurs, contact an onsite professional to help determine the cause and remedy.