

5. Add the scum and sludge depth measurements. If they total more than half of the total depth of the tank, then it is time to clean the tank.

In the illustrated example:

the scum depth is 12 inches

the sludge depth is 20 inches

total 32 inches

Maximum available liquid volume (depth of tank) is 60 inches.

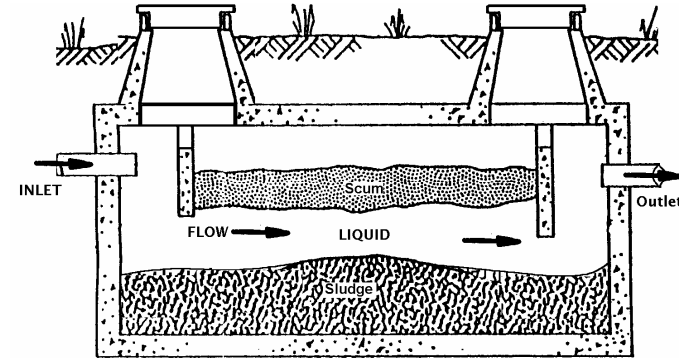
$\frac{1}{2}$ of 60 inches = 30 inches

This tank should be cleaned.

The Geauga County Health District maintains a list of registered septic tank cleaners. If you are experiencing problems with your sewage ponding in your yard or backing up into your home, your septic system needs to be inspected. The Health District can make recommendations for corrective measures. The Health District maintains a list of registered sewage disposal system installers who can perform the necessary repairs.

Do not use septic additives to assist your tank. There is no evidence that additives will restore your system to satisfactory operation and some could actually increase your problems.

Is it time to clean the septic tank?



The primary treatment section of a household sewage disposal system is the septic tank. The tank is designed to allow liquid to flow out of the tank in a controlled manner, then on to additional treatment. The scum and sludge are intended to stay in the septic tank because they cannot be treated in the same manner as the liquid portion. Over a period of time the scum and sludge layers will increase in volume reducing the liquid capacity of the tank.

Eventually the septic tank will have to be cleaned. If it is not cleaned, the scum and sludge material can actually be forced out of the tank along with the liquid. This will result in damage the secondary treatment portions of the sewage system resulting in expensive repair or replacement. It can also result in sewage backing up into the home resulting in a health risk and annoyance.

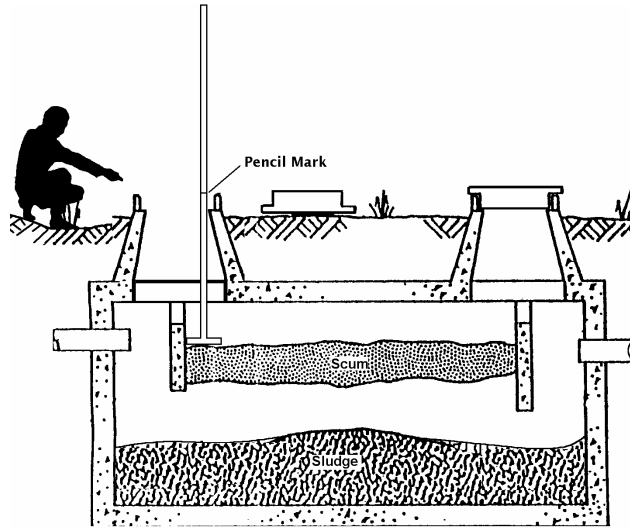
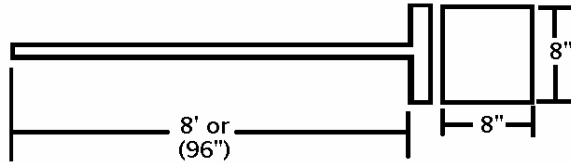
A little effort on the homeowner's part can prevent these serious problems, and save expensive correction costs. The most important step that a homeowner can take is to pump the septic tank on a regular basis. What determines "a regular basis" is based on many factors and varies for every homeowner. Rather than guess if the tank requires cleaning, the homeowner can perform a simple maintenance check to determine if the septic tank requires cleaning.



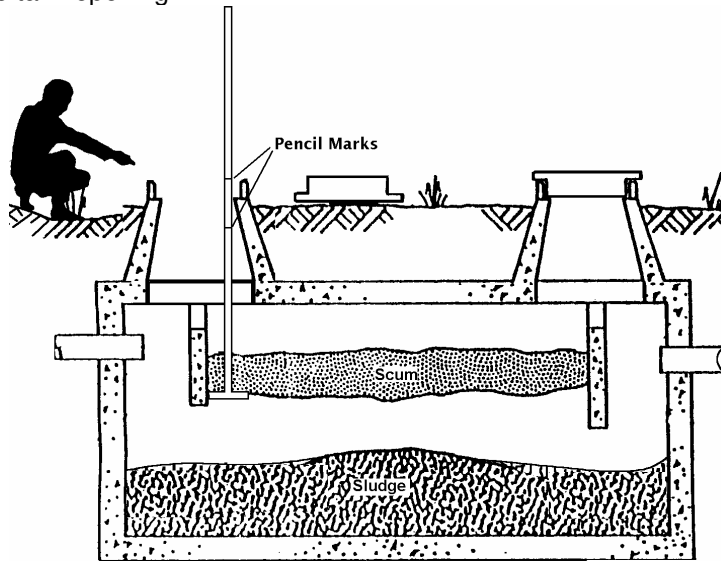
Geauga County Health District
470 Center St. #8
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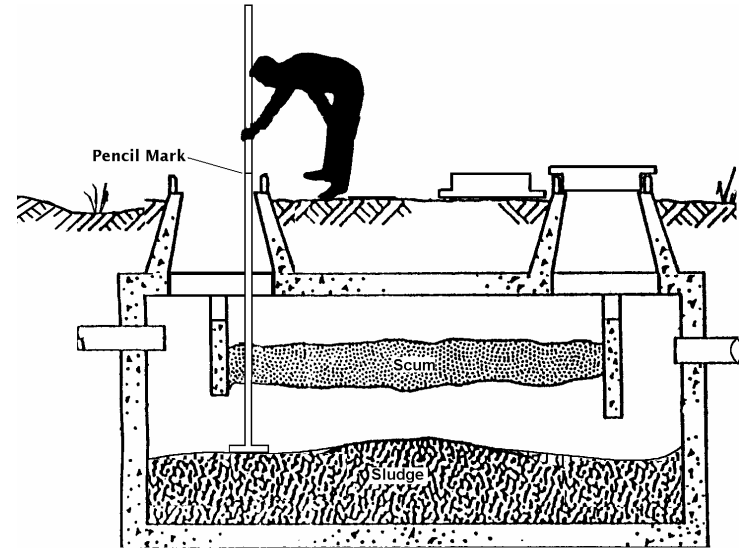
Begin with an 8" square board nailed to the end of an 8 foot long stick, such as a 2" x 2" board.



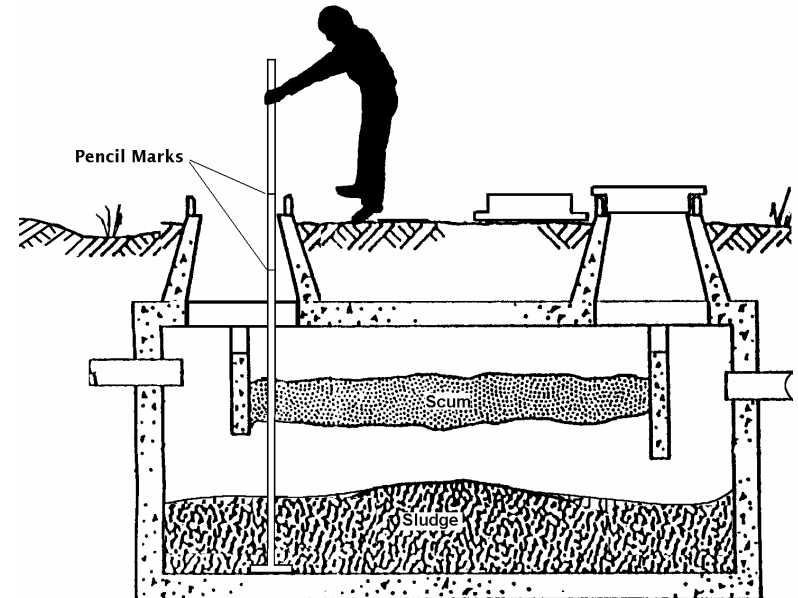
1. Lower the board until it touches the top of the scum layer. Mark the stick at the tank opening.



2. Push the board through the scum layer to the top of the liquid. Mark the stick at the tank opening. This is the scum layer depth.



3. Let the board drop through the liquid until you feel resistance from the top of the sludge. Mark the stick at the tank opening.



4. Push the board through the sludge to the bottom of the tank. Mark the stick at the tank opening. This is the sludge depth. (Note: If you do not know the total depth of your tank, the measurement from this mark to the end of the 8" square board, less the height of any riser, is the tank depth)