

CLEENOL

EST. 1948

DETERGENTS AND DISINFECTANTS IN USE WITH SEPTIC TANKS

Septic Tank Operation

Septic tanks are used, in the absence of normal sewerage drains, to condition the sewage, so that it may be subsequently discharged into the land and allowed to percolate into the subsoil.

As sewage enters the tank, larger solids either sink to the bottom or rise to the surface. The sludge and scum so formed, as well as the liquid in the tank, are then decomposed by bacteria living in the system. The bacteria often used are of a type called anaerobes which thrive in the absence of free oxygen; other systems (e.g. Klargestar), found particularly in hotels, use aerobic treatment.

These processes result in liquefaction of most of the solids and produce a relatively clear liquid effluent. Residual inert solids are retained in the tank and have to be periodically cleaned out (approximately every 6 months).

Effect of Cleaning Products (Detergents) Entering Septic Tanks

Septic tanks are not adversely affected by synthetic detergents. All detergent products available in the U.K. are at least 80% biodegradable, which means they rapidly "break down" in the septic tank without causing any problems. In fact, they can actually provide a source of nutrients for the bacteria present.

Effect of Disinfectants/Bleach Entering Septic Tanks

Since the operation of a septic tank is dependent on bacterial activity, the effect of disinfectants/bleach is often questioned. The main point is that when a disinfectant is used as normal, it has been diluted with water to such an extent that there is little likelihood of inhibiting the regular bacterial action in septic tanks. If the disinfectant is bleach-based (normally sodium hypochlorite), there will be the additional safeguard that the large amounts of organic matter present in the tank will rapidly deactivate the product.

Effect of Enzymes Entering Septic Tanks

Those enzymes used as biological ingredients in washing products have no effect on the bacteria in septic tanks. The level of enzyme reaching the tank, after the washing process, is very low and furthermore it has been shown that any residual enzymes remaining are actually beneficial since they help to degrade waste products.

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Dosing and Dilution Control

At Cleenol we provide dilution control or dosing control systems for our chemical cleaning products either through dosing pumps such as those used for dishwashing chemicals or laundries. These ensure that the products are not overdosed and thus excessive amounts of chemical are not being put in the effluent.

An adequate septic tank installation will be able to handle normal detergent and disinfectant discharges, without any loss of its efficacy.

Problems with Septic Tank Operation

Most problems in the operation of septic tanks are caused by “overloading” the system. In particular large volumes of alkaline liquid sometimes containing high levels of bleach (e.g. a discharge from an industrial or institutional dishwashing machine), can have a negative effect on certain types of septic installations.

It is common to find sites where the septic tank was originally installed to cope with household levels of waste, and then, due to a change in the use of the building (e.g. to a hotel or other institution), laundry and mechanical dishwashing machines have been introduced and their volumes of effluent output (sometimes at quite high temperature) are regularly overloading the septic tank’s capabilities.

Therefore, when septic tank operational problems are experienced, the first thing to check is the capacity of the system to handle the volume of waste it is receiving. If a lot of acidic or alkaline liquid is being discharged into the septic tank, it may be necessary to consider ways of minimising the effects (for example by use of pre-dilution in an intermediate holding tank).

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