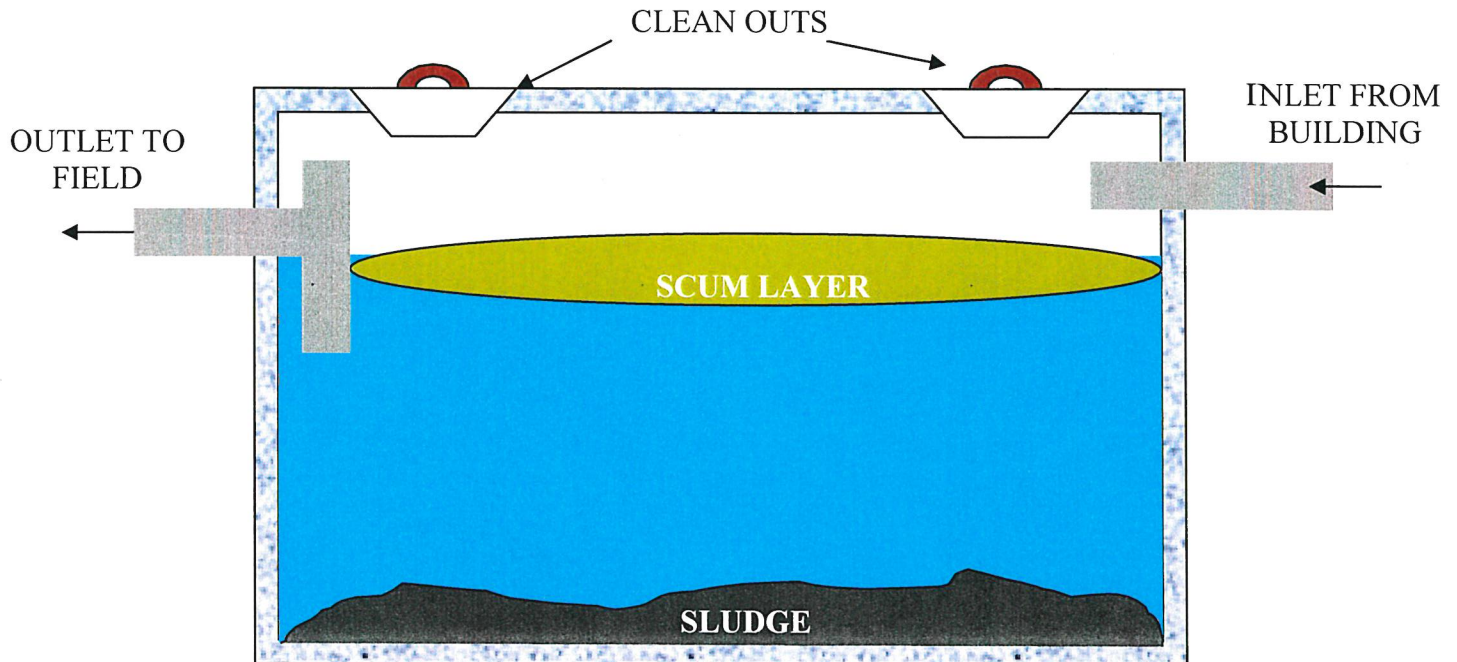


THE COMMON SEPTIC TANK



Cleaning Your Septic Tank

Your septic tank is designed to capture the floating scum and settled solids sludge. These materials are intended to be periodically pumped out. Each tank should have an inspection port (clean out lid) over the inlet and the outlet lines to allow for inspection, pumping and other maintenance. The frequency of pumping your tank will depend on the size of the tank, the volume of water used daily, and the amount of grease and solids flowing in to the tank. Typical homes should have their tanks pumped every three to five years. After the tank is pumped the first time it will be easier to determine pumping frequency. As a rule of thumb your tank should be pumped if:

Settled sludge is:

- more than 12 inches deep
- within 12 inches of the bottom of the outlet baffle

Floating scum layer is:

- near the top of the outlet baffle
- within 6 inches of the bottom of the outlet baffle
- more than 8-10 inches thick.

Outlet filters should be cleaned per manufacturer's recommendations (about once a year)

The septic tank is usually located 5 to 10 feet outside the house where the main sewer line exits the building. Look for an area of settling or where the grass does not grow quite as well. It may also be the area where the snow melts first in the spring or where it accumulates last in the winter. You may wish to try and locate it with a metal soil probe (be sure and check for underground electrical lines); however, the septic tank pumping company will usually locate and dig it up, for a fee. The location of the tank should also be drawn on the permit issued by the health department. You may wish to make your own drawing for future reference. Only companies licensed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality can pump a septic tank. See state listing at www.michigan.gov/deqseptage