

# Septic guide offered by Health Department

As part of the Department of Health's ongoing outreach effort to provide homeowners with information on septic tank systems, an easy to read and understand brochure has been published and is now available to homeowners. The brochure covers how septic tanks and drain fields work, common things to remember for effective operation of your wastewater system, and a sample record keeping form to help homeowners better keep track of inspections and pump outs.

"Because septic tank systems are buried underground, use no electricity and rely on microscopic natural soil bacteria to purify wastewater, we tend to forget about them and the vital role they play in preserving our coastal waters and fresh underground sources of drinking water, as well as protecting our public health," according to Dr. Bruce Anderson, director of the Department of Health.

It is estimated that a quarter of all U.S. homes have septic tank systems - that's almost 24 million households. In Hawaii, the use of septic tank systems is increasing due to restrictions on the construction of new cesspools. During the last 10 years, over 6,000 septic tank systems have been installed in unsewered areas throughout the State.

The department regularly responds to septic tank problems in the community and is concerned that homeowners are not properly maintaining their systems. For continued and effective operation, septic tank systems require occasional inspection and pumping to remove accumulated scum and sludge. Routine inspections and periodic tank pump outs prolong the life of the wastewater system, and prevent failure and costly replacement of drain fields. They also prevent wastewater overflows in yards and in homes as well as protect the public from diseases and vectors associated with raw wastewater.

A copy of the Septic Tank Brochure can be obtained from any of the following Wastewater Branch Offices: in Honolulu at 919 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 309; in Hilo at 1582 Kamehameha Ave.; in Kona at the Old Kona Hospital in Kealahou; in Lihue at 3040 Umi St.; and in Wailuku at 54 High St. Requests can also be made by e-mail to: [WWB@cha.health.state.hi.us](mailto:WWB@cha.health.state.hi.us). For assistance in locating a septic tank pumper in your area, the Wastewater Branch can also provide you with a listing of septic tank pumping companies that have undergone State sponsored training on the proper inspection and pumping of septic tanks. For additional information on our septic tank system program, contact the Wastewater Branch at (808) 586-4294.