

## What is the difference between septage and biosolids?

Septage is the human and household waste flushed into a septic tank, latrine or portable toilet, and it is normally only found in a liquid form.

Biosolids are the accumulated and treated residual products from domestic wastewater treatment. For example, human and household waste that has been processed by a sewage treatment plant. Biosolids can be found in both “Cake” (thick, pudding-like consistency) and liquid forms.

## Tri-County Health Department

Tri-County Health Department Regulation No. I-02 defines septage as a liquid or semisolid which includes normal household wastes, human excreta, animal or vegetable matter in suspension or solution generated from a septic tank serving a dwelling, building or other establishment.

## The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Definition

The EPA defines septage as liquid or solid material removed from a septic tank, cesspool, portable toilet or similar system that receives only domestic sewage. It is not grease trap pumpings and commercial or industrial waste.

## Environmental Health Office Locations

### Aurora

15400 E. 14th Place, Suite 309  
Aurora, CO 80011  
303-363-3055

### Bellevue - Administration Office

7000 E. Bellevue, Suite 301  
Greenwood Village, CO 80111  
303-220-9200

### Castle Rock

4400 Castleton Ct.  
Castle Rock, CO 80109  
303-663-7650

### Commerce City

4201 E. 72nd Avenue  
Commerce City, CO 80022  
303-288-6816



Tri-County Health Department  
7000 E. Bellevue, Suite 301  
Greenwood Village, CO 80111  
(303) 220-9200  
[www.tchd.org](http://www.tchd.org)

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# Proper Land Application of Septage



*Septage is the human and household waste flushed into a septic tank, latrine or portable toilet. When applied properly, it helps to fertilize soil and add organic content and it is an economical solution to managing septage.*



**Septage is the human and household waste flushed into a septic tank or latrine.**

**What does Tri-County Health Department do to regulate the land application of septage?**

Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) licenses Individual Sewage Disposal System cleaners (“Septic system pumpers”).

As part of the licensing process, TCHD requires that systems cleaners submit to TCHD contracts with the facilities they use to dispose of the domestic septage, which they remove from septic tanks. These “facilities” include sewage treatment works as well as companies that accept and “land apply” the septage.

TCHD responds to complaints about land application of septage, but does not issue permits to land-apply septage.

**What are the benefits of land application of septage?**

- Septage contains nitrogen and phosphorus like many other fertilizers. It helps to fertilize soil and add organic content
- It is an economical solution to managing septage

**What are the risks of improper land application of septage?**

- If improperly applied, it may expose humans and animals to harmful pathogens (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) that could cause diseases to humans
- It could attract insects, rodents, birds and other animals that could transmit diseases to humans
- It could cause nuisances such as odors and visible trash
- It could pollute ground and surface waters



**What regulations govern the land application of septage?**

Tri-County Health Department Regulation No. I-02 requires that septage be disposed at sites approved by local county officials or approved by the Health Officer “in a manner which does not create a hazard to the public health, a nuisance or an undue risk of pollution, and which complies with state and local rules and applicable regulations.”

In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “503 Rule” sets standards for the use or disposal of septage. If you report suspected illegal application of septage to TCHD, we can coordinate enforcement action with the EPA using their authority under the 503 Rule.

**How do the regulations protect me from the risks of septage?**

- They require treatment, injection, or incorporation of septage below the ground to reduce the risk of disease transmission
- They limit exposure to grazing animals after application
- They set a time limit on planting of food crops at application areas
- They limit the amount applied to land in order to avoid contamination of groundwater and surface water



**How do I get more information or report illegal activity?**

For more information or if you suspect that someone is illegally or improperly land applying septage, please contact us at our Environmental Health Field Offices. We will investigate the complaint and take appropriate action:

- Aurora Office: (303) 363-3055
- Bellevue Office: (303) 220-9200
- Castle Rock Office: (303) 663-7650
- Commerce City Office: (303) 288-6816

Please be specific with your complaint, including information about the vehicles involved. Obtain a license plate number or any other identifiable information from the truck or other equipment if possible. Record the location of your observations as well as a date and time, who was involved (if known) and what you observed taking place. Photos can also be very helpful during an investigation.

Both biosolids and septage are required to be land applied at an agronomic rate (the rate at which the crops can uptake the nutrients with none left over). If you see someone dumping liquids from the back of a truck this is most likely NOT legal and should be reported.

Likewise, if the operator is using equipment that is adjustable it is probably okay but we can verify this if we receive additional information.