

What Constitutes a Septic Emergency? (And Who to Call 24/7)

Septic systems are generally reliable, but when they fail, they fail in a big way. The problem is that many homeowners aren't sure what's a minor issue and what's a full-blown emergency.

A gurgling drain is an "inconvenience." Raw sewage in your bathtub is an emergency.

Knowing the difference can save you from a major health hazard, serious property damage, and a lot of panic. An emergency septic service is required when your system is no longer just "slow"—it has stopped working completely and is threatening to contaminate your home or property.

Here is what constitutes a true septic emergency and what you need to do immediately.

The 3 Signs of a Septic Emergency

If you experience any of the following, you need to call for 24/7 emergency service right away.

1. Sewage Backup in Your Home

This is the most critical and hazardous septic emergency. You'll see it as:

- Toilets that overflow with raw sewage after flushing.
- Black, foul-smelling sewage water coming up through the drains in your bathtubs or floor drains (this is the lowest point in your home's plumbing).

- Water backing up into sinks when the washing machine drains.

This is a **Category 3 "Black Water" event**. This water is highly toxic, teeming with bacteria and pathogens. It can cause serious illness and will contaminate everything it touches—drywall, flooring, and furniture, all of which may need to be professionally remediated or destroyed.

2. Pooling Water or "Wet Spots" in Your Yard

This is a sign of a major system failure. If you see standing water, a spongy "mushy" patch of ground, or black, odorous liquid surfacing in your yard (especially over the tank or drain field), your system is overloaded.

This is untreated effluent rising to the surface. It is a severe health hazard for your family and pets and an environmental contaminant for your property and your neighbors'. This isn't just a "full tank"; it's a sign your system is actively failing and needs immediate attention.

3. A Complete Plumbing Stoppage

This is when *nothing* in your house will drain. You flush a toilet, and it fills. You turn on a sink, and it fills. This means the system is at 100% capacity and a backup into the house (see #1) is the very next thing that will happen. Your system is screaming for help.

What to Do Immediately in a Septic Emergency

If you're facing one of these three scenarios, do not panic. Follow these steps.

- 1. STOP ALL WATER USE. IMMEDIATELY.**

- o Do not flush any toilets.
- o Do not run any sinks, showers, or tubs.
- o Do not run the dishwasher or the washing machine.
- o Every drop of water you add will make the backup worse.

2. CALL FOR 24/7 EMERGENCY SEPTIC SERVICE.

- o Do not call a regular plumber; they are not equipped to pump a septic tank.
- o You need a [**Septic Tank Cleaning Service**](#) with an emergency dispatch.
- o When you call, use the words "sewage backup in my home" or "septic emergency." This will ensure you get priority service. (Black Diamond offers 24/7 emergency services for this exact reason).

3. KEEP AWAY FROM THE SEWAGE.

- o If you have a backup in your home, close the door to that room.
- o Keep pets and children far away from the affected area.
- o If you *must* enter the area, wear rubber boots and gloves.
- o Do not touch the standing water with your bare skin.

4. (Optional) Shut Off Your Main Water Valve.

- o If you are worried someone in the house might forget and flush a toilet, you can shut off the main water line to your house as a failsafe.

Do *not* try to fix the problem yourself. Do not use chemical drain cleaners (they won't work and will add toxic chemicals to the spill). Do not open the septic tank lid.

A true septic emergency is one of the worst problems a homeowner can face. But by acting quickly and calling the right

professional, it can be contained and resolved. The best way to "fix" an emergency? Prevent it with the regular, scheduled septic tank pumping your system needs