

Advanced WasteWater Specialists, LLC

Protecting water quality in the "Last Best Place"
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It is required by the State of Montana that any septic system that forces septic effluent from a septic tank to a drain field has a septic tank alarm in place. The alarm should be located in or near your house so that if it does sound, you will be able to hear it.

My alarm is going off! What does that mean?

Never ignore an alarm: something has triggered the alarm and ignoring it may lead to further problems and expensive repairs. The alarm is a warning device for the homeowner to correct the issue before it becomes a major problem. **DO NOT CALL A PUMPER.** We will notify you if the tank needs to be pumped. We also prefer water in the tank to test the pump. The faster you speak to a septic **specialist** the faster they can diagnose the problem and get your septic system working properly again. Your local specialist will know the different types of systems and control/alarm panels and your description of your panel will help him to determine what type of system you have.

There are several causes of septic alarms.

1. Your septic system could be in "high-level", and is unable to pump the water out or process the waste.
2. If you have a timer you may have given your septic system too much water to process, and it needs simply more time to catch up.
3. You could have a leak and are taking on ground water, and the system is just simply unable to keep up.

So, what do I do?

Properly installed septic systems that are run on a timer are designed to have enough room in the tank for 24 hours of conservative usage after the **first** time the alarm sounds. If this is the **first** time you have heard the alarm then you can take a breath. However, laundry, dishwashing, and showering are discouraged. You need to call a Septic **Specialist** to help you figure out what type of system you have.

If you do not have a timer and have a Pressure Dose type system. **It is important to stop running all water.** In most cases this type of system will not clear itself. There are several possible causes for the alarm.

1. It can be as simple as a tripped circuit breaker. This will save you the most money. Check the breakers in your circuit box. If you find a tripped breaker switch if back on. If it happens again, there is something wrong, and needs to be checked out. Our minimum service call if we have to come out is \$125.00
2. It can be a bad "on/off" float switch. This is what tells the pump to come on. If it fails to turn the pump on, the sewage level will set off the high level alarm. The electrical connections may be corroded and need to be replaced.
3. It can be a bad pump or an object caught in the impeller of the pump.
4. Pumps only last in a septic system for about 10 years. The cost to replace a pump usually runs \$500-\$1000 dollars depending on the size and type of pump installed.
5. If you have a filter alarm, than filter needs to be cleaned.
6. The laterals in the drain field may be plugged. Estimate for clearing the lines can range from \$325 and up depending on the system. This can be avoided if the system is serviced annually by a registered service provider. Our annual inspection, which will include flushing of components (as long as proper equipment was installed during installation) is \$225.00
7. There may a broken or frozen pipe between the tank and the drain field. These repairs can become costly depending on the location of the break. Depending on the time of year the drain field may be frozen. Estimate for thawing the lines can range from \$325 and up depending on the system. Thawing drain field lines **will not** guarantee the system will not freeze again.

If there is a timer controlling how much waste water your system is allowed to handle you will have to work closely with your Maintenance Provider.

1. You could have simply fed your septic system too much water. Stop running all water inside the house. Wait for 6-8 hours. **If your alarm does not clear itself, then follow the troubleshooting steps listed above.**

If you have ground water intrusion, rain water or surface water is getting into your system causing your system to be hydraulically overloaded. This situation is more difficult to determine but generally simple to fix. Spend some time talking to your Maintenance Provider to determine a course of action.