



Mille Lacs Lake Watershed  
Management Group

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Topic of the Month - December 2018

# Don't let your septic system freeze

Lack of snow cover and dropping temperatures can spell trouble for homeowners with septic systems. Snow helps to insulate septic systems and keep them from freezing. Unfortunately, we are waiting for our snow cover and temperatures across the state are dropping.

The University of Minnesota has tips for homeowners on how to prevent septic system freeze-ups as the winter season progresses.



- Place a layer of mulch 8 to 12 inches thick over the pipes, tank, and soil treatment system to provide extra insulation. This can be straw, leaves, hay or other loose material that will stay in place and not become compacted.
- Use water—the warmer the better—if you're worried your system is starting to freeze. Spread out your laundry schedule so you run one warm/hot load a day. Use the dishwasher and take hot baths. Do **not** leave water running all the time—this may overload the septic system.
- Going away for an extended period? Have someone use warm water in the home regularly or pump out your tank before leaving.
- Fix any leaky plumbing fixtures or appliances in your home. This will help prevent freezing problems and help your system perform better all year.
- Keep all vehicle, animal, and people traffic off the system. This is a rule to follow all year as compacted snow and soils cause frost to go down deeper and faster.
- Add more insulation to your system. This could include replacing pipe with insulated pipe, adding expanded foam panels over septic tanks, or adding more soil cover.

If your septic system freezes, call a septic system professional. The MPCA website includes a search tool for finding certified professionals in your area. For information on keeping your system healthy all year, visit the at <https://septic.umn.edu>.

Properly functioning septic systems keep our lakes and groundwater healthy!

This information provided by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.