

# Grinder Pump Information



This document is designed to give the homeowner a basic understanding of their grinder pump system. Please familiarize yourself, family, and guests with all the information in this document.

The first systems were purchased in the early 1980's. They are designed to handle normal residential wastewater. The Village of Germantown Hills is responsible for system maintenance. The homeowner is responsible for providing electrical power to the pump control box. This area must be clear of all landscaping trees and greenery. **If the control box and tank area are not accessible there will be no repairs made until it is clear.** The homeowner owns the sewage pipe from their home to the holding tank.

## The Tank

The grinder pump system has a tank that is part of a low-pressure system that takes sewage and all water that runs down the drains of your home to our community sewer treatment plant. This tank is located in your yard and contains your pump and a system of floats. There is a lid approximately 28" in diameter that should be visible and easily accessible at all times since service and maintenance will be done through access of this lid. Do not plant any foliage close to the tank or build anything around the tank. Also, avoid diverting surface water over the basin, as this costs you money to pump water leaking into the holding tank as well as unnecessary wear of the pump.

## **The Control Panel Box**



The control panel box to your grinder pump is located on the side of your home that measures approximately 12" and has a red alarm light on top. This box must be visible at all times and easily accessible, as service and maintenance will also be done through access to this box. If you observe the red light on at any time, it indicates a problem. Notify the Village immediately and a Village Representative will call you and access the situation.

## **Guidelines to Avoid Risks**

The proper use of the sewer system by homeowners and their guests will help avoid most grinder pump problems.

There are many items that can cause problems, not just within your grinder pump, but also at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and lift stations and should not be put down the drain or toilet, including but not limited to:

- Personal hygiene wipes
- Feminine Hygiene products, including sanitary napkins, tampons, tampon applicators
- Disposable diapers
- Clothing
- Toilet brushes
- Condoms
- Gravel
- Dirt
- Hair
- Oils or grease, etc.
- Dental floss
- Solid waste, including food, garbage, and rags
- Chemicals
- Drugs



## Floats

**Grease:** Grease such as cooking oils, tallow, bacon grease, etc. will harden in the lines and on the float switches causing the pumps not to work. Grease building up on the pump control float is one of the main causes of failures. This will result in an alarm condition and possible sewage back-up into your home.

**Power Failure:** In case of a power failure, such as during a storm, avoid all water usage such as laundry, bathing, and toilet flushing. Storage tank space is limited and damages can/will likely result.

**Power supply to your system:** Do not turn off the power when you are on vacation

**Access to your tank and control box:** Please make sure your tank and control box are free of all types of landscaping in order for there to be clear access for maintenance and repairs. If the areas around the tank and control box are not clear repairs will not be made until it is accessible.

## Recommendations

### Alarms

An audible alarm can be installed on the control panel that is located on the outside of your home by the Village of Germantown Hills and you can contact the Village for current pricing. This alarm will sound in combination with the red light that is on your control panel. A sounding alarm may help alert you or a neighbor sooner to the fact that there is a sewer/pump problem. If there is a need to silence the alarm this can be accomplished within the control box. If you are interested in having an alarm installed, please contact the Sewer Plant at 383-4200.

Floor drain alarms can be installed by the homeowner. Check with a local hardware store for availability. We highly recommend installation of audible and floor drain alarms.

## **Insurance**

The pump system has a limited life span and can fail at any time for many different reasons. The Village is NOT responsible for any damages to your home. Your normal homeowners' insurance policy will not cover any damage from sewage backup into your home. The homeowner can request that their insurance carrier provide additional insurance to cover back up events. This is typically referred to as a Sewage Backup rider policy. Be sure you understand what is and is not covered under your current policy or rider. We highly recommend adding a rider to your insurance policy.

## **Preventative Maintenance**

A half-cup of bleach a week down the drain followed by a gallon of hot water may help reduce the grease build-up in your system.

## **Maintenance**

The homeowner is not allowed to service or tamper with the grinder pump system in any way. The Village performs preventative service maintenance as weather and time permits.

## **In an Emergency**

**If there is a power outage or a grinder pump is not working, the homeowner should stop using water immediately!**

Report all alarms immediately!

### **Policy regarding grinder pump calls during normal business hours**

Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Please call the Village Hall (309) 383-2209.

### **Policy regarding after hours grinder pump calls**

Monday-Friday after 4:30 p.m. and before 8:00 a.m. Please call (309) 645-2376.

Village service of your grinder pump will be done between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

A Village Representative will be available to answer your call and speak with you regarding your grinder pump alarm. During this call our Village Representative will provide you information regarding operation of your water and sewer, ask for clarification of access to your grinder pump and answer questions you may have. This change in policy will ensure that you know contact has been made and that a Village Representative will be at your home the next day.

### **Weekends and Holidays**

Similar to the weekday you will be able to contact a Village Representative any time. Village service of your grinder pump will be done between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

## **Please Understand:**

If you lose power to your grinder pump system sewage may back up into your home and the control panel will not alarm. **Immediately stop using water!**

Two system shut-off valves isolate the homeowner from the system pressure; one is located at the main pipe near the street and may have become buried. The other is located inside the holding tank and may be hidden below water level if the holding tank is full. The only check valve in the system is located in the pump. If you are interested in installing an additional check valve, consult with a plumber and be sure to contact the Village prior to installation.

## **Service Charges for Misuse**

Abuse and disregard of these guidelines will result in a service charge to be charged to the homeowner.

If the Village technician determines that a grinder pump failure was caused by misuse, meaning improper items (as described above) were disposed into the system, a service charge will be issued to the homeowner, and added to the homeowner's sewer bill, as follows:

- First offense in a 36-month period: \$100.00
- Second offense in a 36-month period: \$200.00
- Third offense in a 36-month period: \$400.00
- Fourth and subsequent offenses in a 36-month period: \$500.00

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

This information has been compiled to help homeowners understand their grinder pump systems. Following these guidelines will by no means eliminate the possibility for pump failure or back-up. These systems are mechanical and can/will/may fail at some point for many reasons. However, failure to follow the guidelines will most likely result in extensive problems and homeowner expense. This document is provided to you for informational purposes only, and the Village cannot guarantee what will or will not happen in any particular situation.