

## What to do with a full latrine pit

### Advantage

- Your pit will be empty after only one or two tanker visits

### Disadvantages

- Vehicles with powerful pumps are very expensive, and it is often very difficult to get spares.

- **Back-fill the top of the pit with soil.**



- **Dig another pit and build a new latrine.**

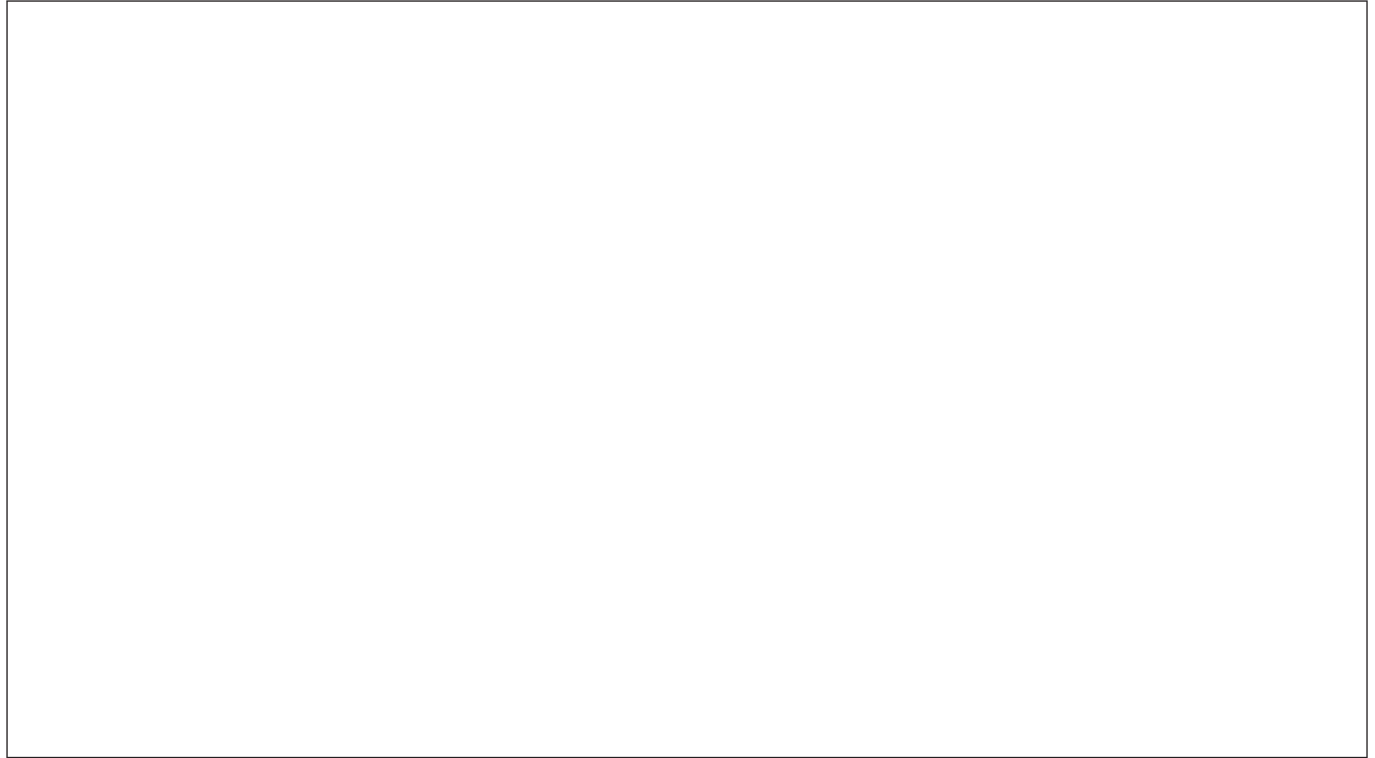
Make your single pit as big as possible,



# Emptying pit latrines

## Sludge from septic tanks

As sewage passes through a septic tank, heavy solids fall to the bottom, where a layer of sludge builds up. Light solids, like grease, rise to the surface and form a layer of scum.



Sludge accumulates at the bottom of the tank. While lying there, it slowly decomposes by anaerobic digestion.

In tropical climates, decomposition may be rapid, and the net increase of sludge (accumulation less decomposition) slower.

After a certain time, the sludge must be removed — the tank is 'desludged'.

In temperate, industrialized countries, desludging is often carried out at regular intervals, for example, every six months.

In hot climates, you can leave the sludge for several years. A simple rule is to desludge the tank when the sludge occupies two-thirds of the tank volume.

Vacuum tankers are commonly employed for desludging septic tanks.

In general, septic-tank sludge is much less dense than solids removed in

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### Further reading

Franceys, R., Pickford, J. and Reed, R., *A Guide to the Development of On-site Sanitation*, WHO, Geneva, 1992.  
Pickford, John., *Low-cost Sanitation: A survey of practical experience*, IT Publications, London, 1995.

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