

# CHIMNEY OAKS

## STEP System User Information Packet

The developer of Chimney Oaks, Banks County Golf, LLC (“BCG”), has built and installed a Septic Tank Effluent Pump (STEP) sewer system throughout the Chimney Oaks development. The comprehensive master plan for Chimney Oaks requires the development to be serviced by a sewer system; however, the property is not in an area that is serviced by either the Town or County sewer systems and gravity sewers are too costly to install.

STEP systems are comprised of a special septic tank, a high-quality pump, and a pressurized piping system. Wastewater enters the tank from the home using a normal gravity flow. STEP systems differ from a conventional gravity sewer as liquids and solids are separated. Liquids are pumped into a pressurized sewer line for treatment, while solids remain in the tank where it naturally degrades and is eventually pumped out by a BCG Utilities Maintenance team.

Depending on usage, solids will only need to be pumped every five to ten years. BCG schedules routine pump outs once every 5 years. If, for any reason, your tank needs to be pumped out prior to its regularly scheduled pump out you will be charged separately.

Residents need to be aware that STEP tanks have special operation and maintenance requirements. Among these are:

- ❖ Access to the tank riser lids, which remain slightly above the ground, needs to be maintained.
- ❖ Access to the system control panel must be maintained. This allows Utility Maintenance Teams to perform routine maintenance and tests on your system. Fencing areas around your control panel can make it difficult to find when service is required.
- ❖ The tank is not designed for supporting heavy loads. Please **DO NOT** drive over the tank with wheeled vehicles. Contractors working for you should be advised of this hazard. Some residents have found that placing attractive shrubs near the tank minimizes this risk. STEP tanks will **not** support a trailer or boat.
- ❖ **Power to the system is provided by the Property Owner.** In the event of a temporary power loss, the tank is designed to hold waste for pumping when power is restored. The tank has the ability to store a limited amount of waste. If power is not restored, please restrict your use of water such as showering, dishwashing, flushing the toilet, rinsing in the sink, or using the washer machine. Emergency pump outs can be arranged for an additional charge by calling (678) 325-0347 or emailing [maintenance@tjpfllp.com](mailto:maintenance@tjpfllp.com).
- ❖ An alarm on the control panel will sound and/or a red light will illuminate on the panel if liquids reach an abnormal level. This can be caused by a number of problems, including a pump failure. From the time that this situation occurs, the tank has roughly 24 hours of capacity left (under normal use). When you have such an incident, curtail water use and call BCG at (678) 325-0347 or email [maintenance@tjpfllp.com](mailto:maintenance@tjpfllp.com). **Do not turn off the main breaker switch for the system as this can worsen the problem.**



**BCG is not responsible for damages caused by a wastewater backup when water use is not minimized after an alarm.**

**You may silence the alarm by pressing the “Silence” button on the side of your control panel located on the exterior of your home.**

- ❖ As with all sewer serviced buildings, maintenance of piping between the tank and the residence are the responsibility of the property owner.
- ❖ Excessive use of a garbage disposal will clog the system. We encourage composting food materials instead of using a garbage disposal. Depending upon the circumstances, damage resulting from clogs will be charged to the resident.
- ❖ A recorded easement is in place that allows BCG access to perform maintenance and repairs of the STEP System.
- ❖ Disposing grease into the system will also clog the system and can result in costly repairs for both the resident and BCG. **Residents must refrain from pouring grease into drains or toilets.** Depending upon the circumstances, damage resulting from clogs can be charged to the resident.
- ❖ Some substances that may be flushed into a traditional sewer are **NOT allowed** to be disposed of through the STEP system. This list includes, but is not limited to: dental floss, fats, oils, grease, feminine hygiene products, diapers, wipes (including wipes that claim to be “flushable” or “septic safe”), cotton swabs, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, and cat litter. Flushing these items can clog and potentially damage your STEP system. If you require an emergency or unscheduled pump out because these items were disposed of in your system, you will incur an additional charge to your account.
- ❖ Digging near the tank can damage the system and cause injury. Other utilities can cause similar results. Before digging, please call Georgia 811 for a utility locate. It’s the law!
- ❖ Only sanitary wastewater shall be discharged into the tank. Roof drains and other stormwater sources are strictly prohibited.

#### How to Care for Your STEP System

- ❖ **Use Water Efficiently.** Average indoor water use in the typical single-family home is almost 250 gallons per day. Dripping faucets can waste as much as 2,000 gallons of water each year and leaky toilets can waste as much as 200 gallons each day. The more water a household conserves, the less water enters the STEP System.
- ❖ **Flush Responsibly.** Be careful with undesirable substances and never flush the prohibited items set forth above. Additionally, excessive use of toilet paper or the use of extra thick toilet paper may cause the need for an unscheduled pump out which will incur an additional charge to your account.

*If you have any questions about your STEP System, please email [maintenance@tjpfllp.com](mailto:maintenance@tjpfllp.com).*

- ❖ **Minimize Use of Garbage Disposals.** Using your garbage disposal increases the amount of solids entering the septic tank and thus the frequency of required maintenance visits to pump the solids from the tank. More maintenance means higher costs for everyone.
- ❖ **Keep Excess Rainwater Out of the System.** Watch out for rain drains or storm drains that may flow in the direction of the STEP System. Additional water increases pumping costs, depletes the available capacity of the sewer system, adds needlessly to the daily volume of the water that the treatment plant must process, and increases costs for everyone. Depending upon the circumstances, damage resulting from excess rainwater can be charged to the resident.
- ❖ **Additives May Cause Damage.** Never add any additives to the STEP System. Special additives that claim to enhance the performance of your tank usually don't and may cause major damage to the other parts of the STEP System. The natural bacteria that form in your system are sufficient. If you are concerned about your STEP System, call (678) 325-0347 or email [maintenance@tjplp.com](mailto:maintenance@tjplp.com) to request an inspection.
- ❖ **Report Vandalism.** We want to make sure that any vandalism hasn't cause some underlying malfunction to the system that may not be immediately apparent. Report any vandalism to BCG by calling (678) 325-0347 or emailing [maintenance@tjplp.com](mailto:maintenance@tjplp.com) to request an inspection.

#### Know Your Responsibilities

- ❖ **Label Your Circuit Breakers.** Know which circuit breaker in your house supplies power to your STEP pump. Label it so that you don't accidentally turn it off causing sewage to overflow from the tank. It is your responsibility to provide power to the STEP System.
- ❖ **Know the Location of Your Service Panel.** Be aware of the location of the electrical service control panel outside of your residence, but do not tamper with it! If a problem occurs, call BCG at (678) 325-0347 or email [maintenance@tjplp.com](mailto:maintenance@tjplp.com).
- ❖ **Maintain Your Own Plumbing.** You are responsible for maintaining the plumbing that connects to the STEP tank. BCG will service and maintain all equipment except the plumbing within the house and the sewer line from the house to the tank.
- ❖ **Know What to Do in Case of A Power Failure.** If a power outage occurs, it is not necessary to call BCG. Your system was designed to work normally once power returns. Your tank has capacity for approximately 24 hours of limited use in a power outage (e.g. toilets, sinks, showers). If your electric power provider cannot restore power within 24 hours, contact BCG for further assistance.
- ❖ **Do NOT Tamper with Your Tank.** Do NOT attempt to enter your tank or remove the green access lid. The septic environment creates gases that can cause illness. If you lid has been removed or damaged, let us know and we will repair it in a timely manner
- ❖ **Unpermitted Sewer Work is Dangerous and Against the Law.** Sewer mains are under pressure. For your own safety, let BCG make all necessary connections and repairs.

*If you have any questions about your STEP System, please email [maintenance@tjplp.com](mailto:maintenance@tjplp.com).*