

ON-SITE WASTE WATER FACILITIES

This information sheet provides basic information and outlines responsibilities as an owner of a waste water facility and a waste water disposal area within your property.

Non-sewered properties store, treat and dispose of wastewater generated via an on-site waste water facility. Septic systems and Aerated Waste Water Treatment Plants are the main types of treatment methods used to dispose of household waste water within a non-sewered property.



Approved on-site waste water facilities

Septic systems or Aerated Waste Water Treatment Plants may be installed within properties subject to geotechnical soils test report results and Local Government approval. A list of approved waste water facility systems can be found on the Department of Housing and Public Works Website.

Owner responsibility

Owners of a waste water facility have legislative obligations under the State Government *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018*, requiring the property owner to ensure the on-site waste water facility is maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and Local Government permit conditions.

Maintenance, servicing intervals and requirements depend on the type of system installed. If you have any questions in regards to your requirements please call Rockhampton Regional Council's Building and Plumbing Compliance Section for advice.

Septic systems

Septic systems use biological methods to treat waste before discharging through below ground trenches. Septic systems do not require regular service reports to be submitted to Council unless conditioned under a Local Government permit or an approved systematic audit programme. It is important to be aware of the following basic maintenance requirements for Septic systems:

- Septic tank may need desludging approximately every five years by a professional pumping contractor.
- Trench area must have the grass mowed, plants maintained and be protected from vehicle passage and livestock.
- Regularly clean out the grease trap if installed.

Aerated waste water treatment plants

Aerated Waste Water Treatment Plants use mechanical, biological and filtration methods to treat waste before discharging through either above or below ground irrigation systems (land application area).



Maintenance and service requirements

The maintenance of an Aerated Waste Water Treatment Plant is mandatory under the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018* and is essential for the satisfactory performance of the facility.

The property owner is responsible to ensure the Aerated Waste Water Treatment Plant is serviced at the required intervals. Service requirements depend on the type of system installed but are generally serviced every 3 months.

The service agent must be licensed with additional on-site sewerage facility maintenance endorsement to carry out required scheduled maintenance.

A service report is prepared by the service agent after each service. A copy should be retained by the property owner and another must be forwarded to Council by the service agent.

Council is required to maintain an Aerated Waste Water Treatment Plant register to monitor service dates and ensure required maintenance is carried out. Should Council become aware of an Aerated Waste Water Treatment Plant not being maintained as required, enforcement action may proceed and penalties applied.

Land application/disposal area

The treated wastewater must be discharged to a designated land application/disposal area. The most common methods are:

Irrigation System

- Surface irrigation (spray above ground)
- Sub-surface irrigation (drippers in shallow trench)
- Covered surface irrigation (drippers on natural ground covered by mulch, woodchip, etc)

Evapotranspiration-Absorption Trench/Bed (embodies the principles of evaporation, transpiration and absorption)

Conventional Absorption Trench/Bed (embodies the principle of absorption only)

The type of land application area will depend on the type of soil that will receive the treated effluent and other site constraints.

The land application area must be kept in its approved form. A well maintained area is critical to ensure adverse health and/or environmental effects are minimised. For advice regarding suitable plants for land application areas please contact manufacturer or service agent.

Maintenance tips

- ✓ Keep your on-site sewerage facility accessible at all times, yet protected from unauthorised use.
- ✓ Conserve water and avoid overloading the system. Fix leaking taps and running toilets as soon as they are discovered.
- ✓ Use only recommended biodegradable products.
- ✓ Use washing and cleaning products recommended by the manufacturer and service agent.
- ✓ Ensure all the treated wastewater is discharged to the designated area.
- ✓ Ensure tank lids are properly sealed to prevent entry of stormwater, mosquitoes and other vermin.
- ✓ Become familiar with how your own particular system operates and the way it looks, sounds and smells when it is working correctly. This way you may be able to identify problems before they become serious and alert your service agent to anything unusual.
- ✓ Call your service agent when you encounter problems with your system, such as alarms and/or unusual odours.

Avoid

- ✗ Do not allow unauthorised alterations or repairs to be carried out on your on-site sewerage facility.
- ✗ Do not cover tanks with earth, concrete, pavers, mulch or other material which could interfere with access or enter the tank when the lids are opened.
- ✗ Do not park or drive over any part of the system.
- ✗ Do not allow children, or animals to enter the land application/disposal area.
- ✗ Do not allow foreign objects such as plastic or rubber products, cloth, rags, sanitary products, bones, metal, glass, tea leaves or coffee grounds to enter the system as they will cause blockages.
- ✗ Do not use products that contain bleach, ammonia, antiseptic or antibacterial elements.
- ✗ Do not discharge chemicals such as paint, varnish, thinners, pesticides. Products like these will kill the bacteria which assist with the successful operation of the system.
- ✗ Don't switch off the system.
- ✗ Don't irrigate fruit and vegetable crops with treated effluent.
- ✗ Don't allow surface sprayed effluent to pond or run off the property or use mist sprays on surface irrigation lines.

Related Websites

Department of Housing and Public Works
www.hpw.qld.gov.au

Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code
www.hpw.qld.gov.au

