

On-Site Wastewater Facilities

Introduction

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

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

Approved On-Site Wastewater Facilities

Septic systems wastewater treatment plants may be installed within properties subject to geotechnical soils test report results and conditions of Plumbing Permit issued by Local Government.

A list of approved wastewater facility systems can be found on the Department of Energy and Public Works Website.

Owner Responsibility

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

Maintenance, servicing intervals and requirements depend on the type of system installed. If you have any questions in regard to your requirements please call Noosa Councils Building and Plumbing Services 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 Compliance 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.

Wastewater Treatment Plants

Wastewater 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 & Service Requirements

The maintenance of a wastewater 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 wastewater treatment plant is serviced at the required intervals. Service requirements depend on the type of system installed but are generally –

- Aerated Wastewater Treatment Plant – 3 monthly
- Sand Filtration System – 12 monthly

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 a waste water treatment plant register to monitor service dates and ensure required maintenance is carried out. Should Council become aware of a wastewater treatment plant not being maintained as required, enforcement action may proceed, and penalties applied.

Land Application/Disposal Area

The treated wastewater must be pumped to a designated land application/disposal area using one of the following methods –

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, or mound

- Trench or bed (embodies the principles of evaporation, transpiration, and absorption)
- Elevated sand mound (specially constructed above natural ground level)

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

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

- ✓ Always keep your on-site sewerage facility accessible 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 Energy and Public Works
<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/building-property-development/building-construction/plumbing-drainage/on-site-sewerage>

Queensland Plumbing & Wastewater Code
<http://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/queensland-plumbing-and-wastewater-code-01-04-11.pdf>

Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018
<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-2018-017>

Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2019
<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/sl-2019-0042>

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