



County of Sacramento

ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PUBLIC HANDOUT

Background

The Environmental Management Department (EMD) is the regulatory authority for the design and construction of onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS). Permits are required to install, repair, or modify OWTS. A permit assures that these systems are installed and operated in a manner that is consistent with State and local regulations pertaining to health, sanitation, and the preservation of surface and ground water for current and future uses. This informational handout has been developed to assist you with the permitting process.

When is a permit required?

- For the installation of a new OWTS.
- For a repair, modification, relocation, or expansion to an existing OWTS as a result of:
 1. A system failure
 2. An increase in wastewater flow
 3. A change in wastewater strength
 4. **A building project requiring the relocation of the OWTS or its components**

The permitting process

The requirements for obtaining a permit depend on the geographical location of your parcel or project. Refer to the Septic System Test Drill map for area determination. The map is available online at www.emd.saccounty.net or you may call our Administrative Support team at (916) 875-8440 and they will identify the area for you.

The map (also on our lobby wall) identifies four different geographical areas within the County of Sacramento. Those areas have been color-coded white, yellow, pink, or green. The first step in the permitting process is to determine in which area of the map your parcel is located. Once your area is identified, refer to the specific area on the next page.

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ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS PERMIT PROCESS

PUBLIC HANDOUT, Continued

White and yellow areas

A typical OWTS for these areas is a standard gravity flow with one seepage pit per bedroom system. Soils studies and percolation tests will not be required prior to the issuance of a permit except in the case of systems used for commercial businesses. Check with the area specialist for specific requirements relating to permits for commercial systems.

Before a permit can be obtained

Before you can obtain a permit you must submit the following:

- A completed permit application signed by the legal property owner or individual with the proper license, issued by the State of California (see the *Frequently Asked Questions* at the end of this document).
- A plot plan of the proposed project with enough detail so that EMD staff can insure that all distance provisions and minimum design standards can be met (See Table 1).
- The appropriate permit fee.

Pink area

The pink area is the **test drill area**. In these areas, subsurface conditions are unpredictable, due to the potential for occasional perched water layers and clay lenses. As a result, a test drill will be required prior to the issuance of a permit if this Department does not have sufficient information on file (information from a previous test drill). The test drill will provide EMD staff with detailed information regarding soil conditions so that the most suitable type of disposal field can be designed. The design will usually be seepage pits, deep trench or leach line.

A test drill can be performed by a registered civil engineer, a registered geologist, a registered environmental health specialist, or EMD staff. If choosing EMD staff, a test drill fee must be paid, and an appointment scheduled at least 24 hours in advance. It is your responsibility to have a contractor onsite with a drill rig capable of drilling a test hole 40-50 feet deep and a minimum of one and one-half foot in diameter. In areas known to have high groundwater, the test hole may be excavated using a backhoe.

On occasion, a test drill will not always provide EMD staff with sufficient information to propose a design for the disposal field area (the success rate of test drills is approximately 90 percent). If this should occur, the test drill fee will not be refunded, and further testing by a registered professional will be required as discussed in the 'Percolation test' section below.

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ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS PERMIT PROCESS PUBLIC HANDOUT, Continued

Pink area, continued

Once a design has been determined, you may then apply for a permit to install an OWTS. To do so, the following must be submitted:

- A completed permit application signed by the legal property owner or individual with the proper license issued by the State of California (see frequently asked questions section of this document).
 - The test drill report if not on file with the Department
 - The appropriate permit fee.
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Green area

The green area is the **Percolation Test area**. All projects located in this area require a registered professional to design an OWTS specific to your site conditions prior to the issuance of a permit. Those professionals are:

- Registered Civil Engineers
- Registered Geologists
- Registered Environmental Health Specialists

Their design includes soils studies and percolation tests in the proposed dispersal field area along with a detailed explanation of the design parameters. Once completed, the design and a plot plan must be submitted to this Department with the appropriate engineering review fee. EMD will review the design and respond to the applicant within five (5) working days. If approved, a permit application can then be submitted to this Department.

In the event that a design is insufficient in detail or does not comply with current rules and regulations, the applicant will be notified of the reasons for denial. The applicant will then be given the opportunity to make the necessary corrections and resubmit the amended plans.

Once a design has been approved, you may then apply for a permit to install an OWTS. To do so, please submit the following:

- A completed permit application signed by the legal property owner or individual with the proper license issued by the State of California (see frequently asked questions section of this document).
- A copy of the approved plans and approval letter, if not on file with this Department.
- The appropriate permit fee.

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ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS PERMIT PROCESS PUBLIC HANDOUT, Continued

TABLE 1. PLOT PLAN CHECKLIST

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Site address <input type="checkbox"/> Name and address of property owner <input type="checkbox"/> Street names <input type="checkbox"/> Exact dimensions of lot <input type="checkbox"/> Lot acreage size <input type="checkbox"/> Parcel APN number <input type="checkbox"/> Plot scale and north arrow. Distances from structures, roads, and water wells must be indicated if the plans are not drawn to scale. <input type="checkbox"/> All areas to be covered with impervious materials such as drives, patios, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All existing and proposed structures <input type="checkbox"/> Location of all water wells on the property and on adjacent parcels if within 150 feet of property line <input type="checkbox"/> Streams, rivers, and drainage ditches if within 150 feet of property line <input type="checkbox"/> Intended location of septic system including 100% replacement area. <input type="checkbox"/> A drawing of the OWTS (new or existing) which includes the tank, distribution boxes, and disposal field.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The plot must provide enough information so that staff can evaluate the project to assure that all distance provisions and minimum design standards can be met. * Parcels on well and septic and of one acre or less, will be required to install an additional 100% of the minimum required dispersal field area. * Parcels on septic only and of one-half acre or less, will be required to install an additional 100% of the minimum required dispersal field area. * For projects subject to zoning codes, approval from the Planning Department must first be obtained. 	