

## TYPES OF HOUSEHOLD WASTEWATER:

- Blackwater is wastewater generated from a toilet which is heavily and directly contaminated with human faeces and/or urine and may contain contaminated solid material, such as toilet paper. This wastewater is highly infectious.
- Greywater is wastewater which does not arise from a toilet and includes wastewater from a hand basin, shower, laundry and kitchen. Greywater is often contaminated with human faeces, dirt and other materials but to a lesser extent than blackwater and is therefore less infectious than blackwater.
- Sewage is a combination of both blackwater and greywater, and again is very infectious.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit Council's website [www.wagga.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wagga.nsw.gov.au) for:

- Council's On-Site Sewage Management Plan.
- Application forms for new installations and upgrades.
- Fact sheets.
- Home owner monitoring OSMS Performance Checklist.



## CONVENTIONAL SEPTIC SYSTEM

# KNOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

### Performance standards

An OSMS must be operated in a manner that achieves the following performance standards:

- (a) the prevention of the spread of disease by micro-organisms,
- (b) the prevention of the spread of foul odours,
- (c) the prevention of contamination of water,
- (d) the prevention of degradation of soil and vegetation,
- (e) the discouragement of insects and vermin,
- (f) ensuring that persons do not come into contact with untreated sewage or effluent (whether treated or not) in their ordinary activities on the premises concerned,
- (g) the minimisation of any adverse impacts on the amenity of the premises and surrounding lands,
- (h) if appropriate, provision for the re-use of resources (including nutrients, organic matter and water).



## CONTACT US

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**Poorly maintained septic systems are a potential source of water pollution and may present serious health risks, cause unpleasant odours and attract vermin and insects.**

Look after your On-site Sewage Management System to help protect the environment, your health and that of your family.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Wastewater from a failing disposal area could contain millions of bacteria in every litre; bacteria which could be highly infectious to you and your family.

## KNOW YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

A septic tank is a wastewater treatment system that provides the first stage of treatment for wastewater. This tank is connected to an effluent disposal area, such as a transpiration bed or absorption trench. The system is also commonly referred to as a conventional On-site Sewage Management System (OSMS). The disposal area must be large enough to absorb and dispose of the wastewater generated by the system.

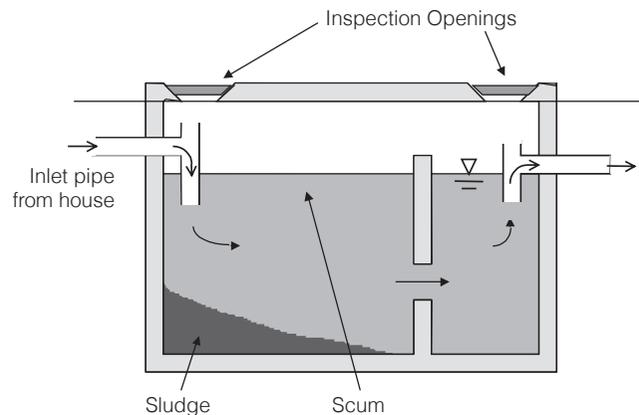
### How it works

All wastewater from the household enters the septic tank. The solids settle to the bottom of the tank and form a sludge layer. The fats and greases collect at the surface, forming a scum layer.

Micro-organisms slowly break down the matter in both the scum and sludge layers. Any material that cannot be broken down will gradually build up. As a result the tank needs to be pumped out periodically.

The wastewater then flows, or is pumped, to a sub-soil bed or sub-soil trench for disposal. The wastewater is distributed along the length of the bed or trench through a system of pipes.

Eventually, the wastewater is absorbed by the soil and by plant roots around the disposal area. If your system is overloaded with wastewater it will not work properly.



## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

As the owner of a septic system, it is your responsibility to:

- Ensure your system is well maintained.
- Ensure your OSMS does not pollute the environment and/or cause a risk to public health.
- Have an understanding about the operating requirements of your system and be aware that you may need to alter your household activities to ensure your system operates sufficiently.
- Ensuring that your system is operating within manufacturer recommendations and also any conditions associated with the approval to operate the system.
- Ensure the septic tank is structurally sound i.e. the tank does not leak.
- Monitor sludge levels within the septic tank, the system is required to be de-sludged by an accredited service provider when solid levels become high.
- Adjust household activities accordingly, avoid 'shock loading' and conserve water.
- Ensure problems are fixed when detected. If a system is defective and cannot be corrected by proper operation and maintenance, householders should consider system replacement.
- Ensure livestock are kept away from the disposal area.

### Maintaining your disposal area

The disposal area of your system must be well maintained and be the right size to correctly dispose of wastewater on your property. Treated wastewater must not pool on the surface or run onto neighbouring properties or into waterways.

No matter how well a system is designed, incorrect maintenance and operation will cause the system to fail. Disposal systems should last around 15 – 25 years, but their life will be much shorter if they are not well built or maintained properly. Regular maintenance helps you avoid expensive repairs.

## SIGNS YOUR SYSTEM MAY BE FAILING

The following signs may indicate a problem with your OSMS and may signal a failing system:

- Water won't drain away easily.
- Drain pipes with gurgling noise.
- Sewage smells from the drains or system.
- Water backing up into sinks or yard gully.
- Wastewater pooling over the disposal area.

## OPERATING YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

The effectiveness of your system is dependent on how it is operated and maintained. The following is a guide to good maintenance procedures that you should follow.

### DO

- ✓ Regularly inspect your septic system and disposal area for odours and pooling water.
- ✓ Divert stormwater away from the disposal area.
- ✓ Maintain grass cover over the surface of the disposal area to allow for the uptake of nutrients and water from the soil.
- ✓ Maximise sunlight to the disposal area where possible.
- ✓ Contact council for advice and information if you are planning to install or modify your septic system, disposal area or add additional rooms to your dwelling.
- ✓ Plant water-loving, shallow rooted shrubs down-slope and away from the trench system to help absorb wastewater.
- ✓ Minimise the use of detergents, bleaches and disinfectants around the home.
- ✓ Fence off the disposal area.
- ✓ Have a T-junction fitted within the septic tank.
- ✓ Have your grease trap (if installed) cleaned out every 2-6 months.
- ✓ De-sludge the septic tank every 2-5 years.

### DON'T

- ✗ Plant trees or shrubs directly on top of the septic tank or disposal area.
- ✗ Plant trees within 4 metres of your septic tank, as roots could create cracks in the tank sides.
- ✗ Build structures, or cover the disposal area with concrete, bricks or pavers.
- ✗ Drive or park machinery or vehicles on top of the disposal area.
- ✗ Allow livestock on the disposal area.
- ✗ Store loads of soil or other materials on your disposal area
- ✗ Flood the disposal area with sprinklers or hoses.
- ✗ Allow children to play on the disposal area.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Septic systems are unable to cope with large volumes of water such as several loads of washing over a short period of time. Avoid these 'shock loads' by ensuring water use is spread evenly throughout the day and week.