

ON-SITE SEWERAGE FACILITIES (OSSF)

What is an On-site Sewerage Facility?

On-site sewerage facilities (OSSF) are used to treat sewage generated from a premise that is located in an unsewered area. The OSSF must be located within property boundaries which includes the land application area.

OSSF include all types of wastewater treatment and land application, such as septic tanks, aerated wastewater treatment systems, biofilter systems, composting toilets, and activated sludge systems. These systems are required in areas not serviced by sewerage infrastructure.

Effective on-site treatment and land application achieves:

- protection of public health and safety
- maintenance and enhancement of environmental quality
- maintenance and enhancement of community amenity

The property owner is responsible for ensuring maintenance is carried out on their system in accordance with the treatment plant approval documents.

Council performs regulatory functions regarding new installations of OSSF, additions to existing systems, effluent run-off complaints, list of licensed service persons, list of site and soil evaluators and maintains a register of OSSF.

Site and Soil Evaluator

One of the important aspects of an on-site wastewater management system is the requirement for a thorough site and soil evaluation to be undertaken as part of the process of obtaining Council approval for effluent disposal within the property.

It is essential for the evaluator to select the most suitable on-site effluent disposal facility for the property and engage best environmental practices to support his or her design.

The quality of effluent from an OSSF is a key consideration to determine how sewage effluent is to be controlled and disposed of within the property.

Before lodging an application to install, extend or remove an OSSF with Council, it is recommended that the property owner consult with a site and soil evaluator to discuss the options available for effluent disposal within the property. A list of approved site and soil evaluators can be found on Council's website at www.scenicrim.qld.gov.au.

Commissioning Certificate

Following the installation of a wastewater treatment plant, the manufacturer of the plant is to certify that the facility conforms to design requirements and specifications and that such equipment has been installed and commissioned in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Risks and Benefits

Poorly operated and maintained facilities can pose a high risk to public health and have the potential to create extensive environmental harm. However, owners of properly maintained systems benefit from more efficient systems with a longer life, increased property values, reduced health risk, and improved environmental quality.

Legislation

Compliance with the *Plumbing & Drainage Act 2018*, *Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2019*, QLD Plumbing & Wastewater Code, AS/NZS 1546 and AS/NZS 1547.

Maintaining Your System

Maintenance requirements differ depending on the type of system you have. State legislation required that aerobic wastewater treatment plants be serviced every three months and aerobic sand filter treatment systems annually.

A licensed service agent must be engaged by the property owner to carry out the maintenance and to advise Council of the performance of your system.

Service agents will normally conduct the following:

- Maintenance to mechanical equipment
- Check accumulated sludge levels.
- Check irrigation system operation
- Add chlorine and check operation of the disinfection system
- Removal of sludge and scum from the clarifier/final chamber

De-sludging Your System

Periodic removal of accumulated sludge and scum from the primary treatment section of your OSSF is required to be carried out by a licensed liquid waste contractor.

Be a Good Neighbour

Effluent must be disposed of within the boundaries of the property from which it was generated. It is an offence to dispose of effluent onto neighbouring properties, gutters or into waterways, or where it could run off into waterways.

Take care that there is no effluent run-off or spray drift onto adjoining properties.

Caring for Your System

Make sure that household products you use do not impair the performance of your OSSF. Ask your service agent or Council if you are unsure.

Dos

- **Do** carry out regular maintenance of OSSF using an approved servicing agent. It is an offence if your OSSF is not maintained regularly by an approved service agent.
- **Do** use only recommended biodegradable products.
- **Do** avoid contact with the effluent and irrigation sprays.

- **Do** call your service agent when you are encountering problems with your system such as alarms and/or smells from the OSSF.
- **Do** conserve water and avoid overloading the system. Fix leaking taps and running toilets as soon as they are discovered.
- **Do** use toilet paper that disintegrates easily.
- **Do** use bicarb soda as a cleaner for toilets, baths and basins.
- **Do** keep a detailed record about your treatment plant, including model number, service agent, records of service visits, maintenance performed and part replacements.
- **Do** 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.
- **Do** ensure your OSSF tank lids are properly sealed to prevent entry of mosquitoes and other vermin.

Don'ts

- **Don't** put food scraps, milk or oil down the sink.
- **Don't** dispose of any product containing ammonia, acids, disinfectants or bleaches into the system as it will kill the bacteria which operate the system.
- **Don't** allow roof or surface water to enter the system as it will overload the system.
- **Don't** allow foreign objects such as plastic or rubber products, cloth, rags, sanitary napkins, bones, metal, glass and tea leaves or coffee grounds to enter the system as they may cause blockages.
- **Don't** switch off the system to save power.

- **Don't** cover tanks with earth, concrete, pavers, pine bark, mulch or other material which could interfere with access for maintenance or enter the tank when lids are opened.
- **Don't** allow anyone to park on, or drive over any part of the system.
- **Don't** make or allow unauthorised repairs or alterations to your system without approval from Council.
- **Don't** use garbage grinders unless the on-site sewerage facility is designed to cope with this waste.
- **Don't** put any chemicals such as paints, thinners, pesticides etc. into the sink as these items can destroy the bacteria digestion process in your system, resulting in the discharge of polluted effluent.

OSSF Service Agents

For a full list a service agents, search the yellow pages under “**waste water & sewage treatment**” or a list of service agents can be found on Council's website at www.scenicrim.qld.gov.au under Forms.

OSSF Approved Systems

For a list of approved systems go to Queensland Government Department of Housing and Public Works website at:

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/building-property-development/building-construction/plumbing-drainage/on-site-sewerage>

or contact them on **13 74 68**.

NOTE: These details and/or links may be updated or changed by the Queensland Government.