



Septic Safe

Factsheet 6



OSMS Roles and Responsibilities

The design, installation and operation of domestic on-site sewage management systems are regulated under the Local Government Act 1993.

The Role of Local Government

An approval is required for:

- the installation, construction or alteration of a human waste treatment device or storage facility and connected drains, and
- the ongoing operation of an on-site management system.

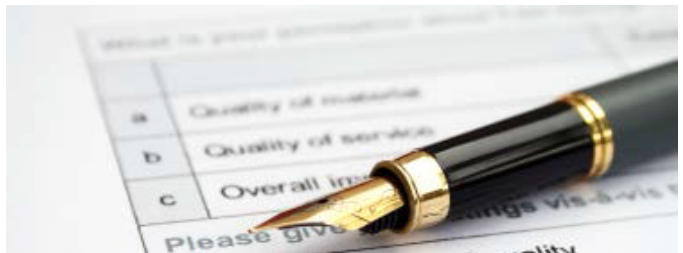
Council monitors the operation of all domestic on-site sewage management systems within the local government area to ensure that those systems comply with relevant performance standards.

Council has powers to issue Orders requiring a person:

- to comply with an approval
- to take action to maintain premises in a healthy condition
- to store, treat or dispose of waste
- not to use or permit a human waste storage facility to be used, and/or
- to connect premises to a public sewer when the sewer is within 75 metres
- Orders may be given to the owner or occupier of the premises or to the person responsible for the waste or the container in which the waste is stored.

The Role of NSW Health

NSW Health provides accreditation for human waste treatment devices or human waste storage facilities that are intended to receive domestic wastewater or human waste.



Accreditation is mandatory for commercially manufactured units and standard designs.

The accreditation provides a centralised assessment and testing procedure. A certificate of accreditation may include specific requirements for the installation, operation and maintenance of the tested system. Such conditions become conditions of Council approval.

Further information about on-site sewage management systems and accreditation can be sourced from NSW Ministry of Health.

Responsibilities of Owners or Occupiers with On-site Sewage Management Systems

It is the responsibility of the owner or occupier of the premises that has an on-site waste water system to ensure that:

- on-site systems are designed, installed and managed so that pollution of groundwater or surface waters does not occur, and
- there is no risk to public health, safety and the environment from the operation of an on-site sewage management system.

Householders must take an active role in the operation of on-site sewage management systems. Householders should have a broad knowledge of on-site sewage

management principles and be able to apply that knowledge responsibly.

Householders should have a sound understanding of the operating requirements of the system they are using and should be aware of the need to adjust household activities accordingly (e.g. by using low phosphorus detergents, minimising use of household chemicals, avoiding 'shock loading' and conserving water).

Correct operation involves regular supervision and system maintenance. Householders also need to ensure that the necessary service and maintenance contracts are in place.

If a system is defective and cannot be corrected by proper operation and maintenance, householders should report this to Council in order to discuss possible system replacement.

Particular consideration should be given to the educational needs of new owners and tenants when a property with an on-site sewage management system is sold or leased.

Responsibilities of Owners upon Sale of the Premises

Vendors (the owners who sell the property) should make sure that the new householder receives an operating manual and that additional copies are available upon request.

The manual should cover the following matters:

- system operation and capabilities
- operating requirements - system capacity, the importance of spreading the hydraulic load and actions to be avoided
- troubleshooting and signs of system failure - such as odours and surface ponding of wastewater
- maintenance and servicing requirements
- management of health risks
- occupational health and safety, first aid and chemical handling
- warranty and service life
- emergency telephone numbers.

Responsibilities of OSMS Service Providers (where the installation incorporates an aerated wastewater treatment system - AWTS)

All service providers who carry out inspections and / or work on on-site sewage management systems must have appropriate training. Service providers should ensure that advice and education on system operation & maintenance are provided to customers and householders at every available opportunity.

Service agents should produce a report, in triplicate, of each service call. This report should certify compliance with operating requirements and specify repairs undertaken and test results. The service agent should provide the householder with the original of this report and then a copy to Council and a copy for their own records.

If a service provider observes that a system failure has been caused by improper use of the system, the service provider should consult with the owner. If the problem continues, then the matter should be reported to Council for appropriate action. When effluent causes pollution, the service provider is required to notify Council.

Service agents should be able to carry out temporary repairs and to correct any immediate risks to public health.

Service agents should ensure that any residual materials removed from an on-site sewage management system are handled and dealt with in accordance with environmental and public health standards and Council's requirements.

Further Information

Environment and Health Unit

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