



FACT SHEET 2

ONSITE SEWAGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

CONVENTIONAL SYSTEMS

The Role of Local Government

The design, installation and operation of domestic On-site Sewage Management Systems (OSMS) are regulated under Local Government Act 1993.

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 OSMS.

Council monitors the operation of domestic OSMS within the local government area to ensure that those systems comply with relevant performance standards in accordance with Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

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 OSMS and accreditation can be sourced from NSW Department of Health.



**City of
Wagga Wagga**

The Role of Owners

It is the responsibility of the owner of the premises to ensure that OSMS are accredited, designed, installed and managed so that pollution of groundwater or surface waters does not occur, and that there is no risk to public health, safety and the environment from the operation of an OSMS.

Householders must take an active role to ensure effective operation of OSMS. Correct operation involves regular monitoring, supervision and system maintenance.

Ensure:

- Your system is safe and well maintained.
- Your system has a current operation approval (licence) and complies with its conditions of approval.
- The septic tank is structurally sound i.e. the tank does not leak.
- You monitor sludge levels within the septic tank and you engage in services of an accredited service provider to de-sludge the tank when levels are high.
- You adjust household activities accordingly (e.g. by using low phosphorus detergents), minimising use of household chemicals, avoiding 'shock loading' and conserving water.
- Problems are fixed immediately when detected. If a system is defective and cannot be corrected by proper operation and maintenance, householders should consider replacing the system.

Signs your OSMS may be failing

A failing system may exist when:

- Wastewater pools on ground surface.
- Soft, damp and boggy areas alongside the trench, bed or subsurface irrigation is noticed
- Water drains slowly from the house.
- Water backs up in the dwelling or yard gully.
- An odour is noted near the tank or disposal area.
- Drain pipes make "gurgling" noises.

Disposal Areas

Your OSMS could fail and cause potential risks to the environmental and your family if the OSMS and the disposal area are not maintained properly. Disposal trenches and beds generally have a lifespan of 15-25 years. This lifespan could be shorter if the trenches or beds are not well designed, installed or maintained.

Ensure:

- The disposal area is installed in accordance with Australian Standards and meets conditions of any approvals issued by Council.
- The disposal area is functioning effectively and efficiently by ensuring the nutrient & organic load is effectively taken up by the soil.
- There is no untreated effluent discharging on ground surface or running off into waterways or neighbouring properties.
- The disposal area is adequately sized to dispose of wastewater generated from your premises.
- Livestock are kept away from the disposal area.
- Trees with an extensive root system are planted well away from the disposal area
- No fruit and vegetable crops are planted in the disposal area.
- Ensure plants in the disposal area are suited to the soil, climate and for uptake of wastewater.

Sale of the Premises

It is the responsibility of the owner of the premises to ensure that new householders (new owners or tenants) receive an operating manual that includes all relevant information regarding the OSMS.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information visit
www.wagga.nsw.gov.au/publichealth
or contact an Environmental Health Officer
on **1300 292 442**.

