

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

No. 100.4

ON-SITE WASTEWATER SYSTEMS AND POWER OUTAGES

WHAT IS AN ON-SITE WASTEWATER SYSTEM?

On-site wastewater systems collect, treat, dispose or reuse domestic wastewater within an individual unsewered allotment. These systems typically comprise:

- septic tanks and greywater diverters with absorption trenches or evapotranspiration beds
- aerated wastewater treatment systems (AWTS)
- biological treatment systems
- composting toilets.

DO ON-SITE SYSTEMS REQUIRE POWER?

AWTS and biological treatment systems are small-scale on-site sewage treatment plants and therefore require power to operate equipment including alarms, pumps and blowers.

Most septic tank systems and greywater diverters do not require power unless wastewater is pumped to absorption trenches/evapotranspiration beds via a pump pit.

Composting toilets do not require power to operate.

WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A POWER OUTAGE?

Powered systems will cease to operate and will back up causing sewage overflows from the property's overflow relief gully (ORG). During this time:

- All raw sewage should be avoided due to the risk of infection
- No food or cuts/abrasions on a person's body should come in contact with raw sewage
- Hygiene practices such as washing hands with soap and clean running water are essential.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE POWER IS RESTORED?

- Reset the on-site wastewater system's circuit breaker on the switchboard.
- Call a plumber or service agent if there is a continuous strong odour of sewage or if chlorine appears around the tanks or irrigation system.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Business hours: Contact the Environmental Health hotline on 1800 095 646

After hours: Contact the Power and Water Corporation hotline on 1800 245 090