ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET NO. 510

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR THE APPROVAL OF CONVENTIONAL SEPTIC TANK SYSTEMS OUTSIDE A BUILDING CONTROL AREA

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BACKGROUND

The installation of septic tank systems (onsite wastewater treatment systems) in the Northern Territory is governed by the Department of Health (DoH) *Code of Practice for small on-site sewage and sullage treatment systems and the disposal or reuse of sewage effluent* (The Code).

The Code was gazetted on 11 November 1998 and is adopted in Regulations 28-28B of the Public Health (General Sanitation, Mosquito Prevention, Rat Exclusion and Prevention) Regulations.

CONVENTIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE SEPTIC TANK SYSTEMS

For the purposes of this Fact Sheet, conventional septic tank systems include septic tanks that disposal effluent to absorption trenches, evapotranspiration beds or mound systems. Alternative Septic Tank Systems (ASTS) are systems that treat effluent to a higher quality than that offered by a conventional septic tank system. These include Aerated Wastewater Treatment Systems (AWTS), Composting Toilets, and Biological Filter Systems. Refer to Fact Sheet No. 507 for the Administrative Procedures for the Installation of ASTS.

Refer to Fact Sheet No. 509 for the Administrative Procedures for Self-Certification of Conventional Septic Tank Systems.

THE ROLE OF REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

Local Government Authorities in the Northern Territory have no jurisdiction over onsite wastewater management, i.e. approval or monitoring of septic tank installations.

The Department of Lands and Planning (DLP) Building Advisory Services administer the provisions of the *Building Act* & Regulations with respect to all septic tank installations within a Building Control Area.

DoH Environmental Health Branch administers the provisions of the *Public Health Act* & Regulations with respect to the:

- Product approval of septic tanks and associated products.
- Conventional septic tanks installed outside a Building Control Area.
- Notification to install an Alternative Septic Tank System (ASTS) for a single residential dwelling.
- Site-specific design approval of an ASTS for commercial, industrial or residential developments with more than one dwelling.

Environmental Health Officers (EHO) employed by organisations such as Health Boards may also be delegated to administer the provisions of the *Public Health Act* & Regulations.

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BUILDING CONTROL AREAS AND WATER MANAGEMENT ZONES

Contact DLP for the location of Building Control Areas that are defined under the *Building Act*. Building Areas typically apply to major urban areas (with the exception of Nhulunbuy) and along the main highways. The installation of conventional septic tank systems is not permitted in Water Management Zones. Contact Power and Water Corporation for locations of Water Management Zones.

EHO APPROVAL TO INSTALL A CONVENTIONAL SEPTIC TANK OUTSIDE OF A BUILDING CONTROL AREA

EHOs are delegated to approve conventional septic tanks (still must be installed be a Licensed Plumber & Drainer) upon prior request by the Owner or Owner's Agent. EHO approval may also be a condition of grant-funded indigenous housing projects, however a fee is applied to each septic tank installation. The following process applies:

- The owner obtains and completes an APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL TO INSTALL A SEPTIC TANK OUTSIDE OF A BUILDING CONTROL AREA (Form S3). When the applicant is not the owner, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the owner details are correct and that the owner has signed the form.
- The owner may be a Company Director or the Authorised Officer of an Association, Incorporated Body or Local Government Authority.
- Submission of the completed application form and required documents and plans to the local Environmental Health Office. An application fee of $400.00 (GST exempt) is to accompany the application and payment should be made out to the Receiver of Territory Monies (RTM). Consideration of an application will only commence when all the required documentation and the receipt are received at the local Environmental Health Office.
- Approval or refusal of the application will be indicated to the owner or owner's agent by return of a stamped and signed copy of the application, specification and plans. In the absence of any local arrangement between the applicant and the EHO the letter will be posted to the address on the application form. Work may commence on installation of the conventional septic tank following receipt of a stamped approved copy of the submitted documentation.
- EHOs will require at least seven (7) working days notice prior to inspection and testing of the conventional septic tank. It is expected that the installation will be at an appropriate stage to facilitate inspection and testing in accordance with the requirements of the Standard Operating Procedure for Septic Tank Inspection. Testing of the system will normally follow the procedures of the National Plumbing Code AS3500. Provision, set up and use of appropriate testing equipment is the responsibility of the installer.
- Following inspection and testing of the septic tank system the EHO will issue a letter either:
  - Permitting the system to be used when final covering and other works have been completed; or
  - Indicating failure to comply with the Code and providing the general area of additional works require to comply with the Code.
- In the event of failure to comply with the Code a new application and $400.00 fee must be submitted to the local Environmental Health Office.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
CONTACT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ON 1800 095 646 OR YOUR LOCAL OFFICE
Email: envirohealth@nt.gov.au

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BARKLY Health Development Building Cnr Schmidt & Windley Sts, Tennant Creek PO Box 346 TENNANT CREEK NT 0861 Phone: (08) 8962 4302 Fax: (08) 8962 4420	**CENTRAL AUSTRALIA** Mwerre House 60 Hartley St, Alice Springs PO Box 721 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871 Phone: (08) 8955 6122 Fax: (08) 8952 5927	**KATHERINE WEST HEALTH BOARD** Unit 10, Riverbank Office Village 38 First Street, Katherine PO Box 147 KATHERINE NT 0851 Phone: (08) 8971 9315 Fax: (08) 8972 1233

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