

Maintaining your wastewater system



Maintaining the system is the property owner's responsibility.

The law states that the owner of a domestic waste water treatment system is responsible for its maintenance and renewal. They must also ensure that its parts and components are fit for purpose, operational where appropriate and kept in good order and repair so as to prevent a risk to human health or the environment.

Here are some points to consider regarding maintenance.

- All wastewater systems require desludging (emptying or removing solids). In addition to desludging, some systems will also need additional maintenance. The supplier of your system should provide you with advice on maintaining your particular system.
- You should only engage a permitted contractor to undertake this work to ensure that your sludge is disposed of correctly. Your local authority can provide you with a list of contractors in your area or go to www.nwcpo.ie. You must keep the receipt for desludging for five years as it may be requested if your local authority carries out an inspection of your system.



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You can find more information in the EPA Code of Practice: Waste Water Treatment Systems for Single Houses at www.epa.ie/water/wastewater/info/



Wastewater Systems for building a house

What you need to consider about your wastewater system (including septic tank)



If you are planning to install a septic tank or wastewater system for a domestic dwelling, you will need to apply to your local authority for planning permission. This leaflet gives you general information about wastewater systems, and offers advice on the planning permission application process.



Before you apply

Engage a suitably qualified person

Engage a suitably qualified person to undertake a site assessment and complete a 'characterisation' form. The person should have attended and passed the Water Services Training Group course on Site Suitability Assessment. A characterisation form outlines the plan for your wastewater treatment facilities, and contains details about the site conditions - for example, the type of ground, the direction of the drainage flow and natural features.

The ground on site dictates the type of system (if any) that may be suitable for your proposed dwelling house. The site characterisation form will be included as part of your planning application documentation.

Find out about suitable systems

Find out about all suitable systems from the EPA Code of Practice: Waste Water Treatment Systems for Single Houses so that you can make an informed decision about which one will suit you best. You will need to think about set-up costs, maintenance and ongoing operation costs.

Check with your local authority about the regulations and policy for your area. This is important, as different policies are in place across the country.

What happens next?

When you have your application documents complete, submit them to your local authority to consider.

If planning permission is granted, the permission is likely to include conditions which relate to the wastewater treatment system and 'infiltration area'. The infiltration area is the ground around the system that contains the pipes, trenches, filters and so on. It is also called the percolation area.

You must be aware of these conditions and adhere to them. They are there to protect the environment and protect the health of the occupiers of the house as well as their neighbours.

Building your wastewater system

The supplier of the septic tank system or wastewater treatment system will have certain requirements that must be adhered to when installing this part of the system. Your builder/contractor and your engineer/assessor have a role in the installation in terms of overseeing the work, and certifying that the installation is carried out according to the terms of the planning permission. This significantly reduces the likelihood of problems with your system.

The installation of the infiltration area is of equal importance to that of the actual tank or treatment unit installed.

The inspections during the installation of the system as well as the construction of the infiltration area are linked to compliance with the building regulations and also linked to the release of your mortgage.

Therefore, you will need certificates from your builder/contractor, your supplier and assessor, and you must provide these to your engineer. You need to do this to show compliance with the building regulations, and compliance with your planning permission, and to allow for the release of mortgage drawdowns.

How a septic tank system treats your wastewater

