

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

No. 509

### **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR THE SELF-CERTIFICATION OF CONVENTIONAL SEPTIC TANK SYSTEMS**

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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 and Families (DHF) *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.

#### **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 Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) Building Advisory Services administer the provisions of the *Building Act* & Regulations with respect to all septic tank installations within a Building Control Area.

DHF 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.

#### **BUILDING CONTROL AREAS AND WATER MANAGEMENT ZONES**

Contact DPI 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.

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**INSTALLATION OF CONVENTIONAL SEPTIC TANK SYSTEMS TO ALL CLASSES OF BUILDINGS WITHIN A BUILDING CONTROL AREA**

The installation of conventional septic tank systems to all classes of buildings within a Building Control Area is bound by the *Building Act*. Therefore, self-certifying plumbers and drainers are responsible for the appropriate installation of product approved septic tanks in accordance with the provisions in the Code. Building Practitioners (includes self-certifying designers, plumbers & drainers) are required to lodge a copy of the DPI Plumbing Compliance Certification for all septic tank installations (including ASTS) to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Environmental Health Officers (EHO) are not delegated under the *Building Act* to approve septic tank installations within a Building Control Area, however they can issue a Site Specific Design Approval for an Alternative Septic Tank System.

**INSTALLATION OF CONVENTIONAL SEPTIC TANKS TO ALL CLASSES OF BUILDINGS OUTSIDE OF A BUILDING CONTROL AREA**

Septic tank systems to all classes of buildings outside of a Building Control Area must be:

Either SELF-CERTIFIED (No fee) by a licensed plumber and drainer\* or APPROVED (\$400 fee) by the EHO for the area in which the works are to be carried out.

Territory Insurance Office's (TIO) Home Building Certification Fund does not extend to septic tank installations outside Building Control Areas.

\* A person who holds a licence issued under the *Plumbers and Drainers Licensing Act*.

**Self-Certification of a conventional septic tank outside a Building Control Area**

The following process applies when the owner or the owner's agent elects for a licensed plumber & drainer (installer) to install a conventional septic tank:

- The installer must notify DHF prior to installing a conventional septic tank by completing a NOTIFICATION OF SELF-CERTIFICATION FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A SEPTIC TANK OUTSIDE OF A BUILDING CONTROL AREA (Form S2) and submit this form to the local Environmental Health Office at least seven (7) days prior to commencement of the works. This form must include details of soil testing, site layout & setback distances.
- Upon installation of the conventional septic tank system, the installer must complete a SELF-CERTIFICATION OF INSTALLATION OF A SEPTIC TANK OUTSIDE OF A BUILDING CONTROL AREA (Form S2) and submit this form to the local Environmental Health Office no later than fourteen (14) days after the completion of the works.

There may be occasions when the EHO will notify the installer within two (2) days of receipt of notification of the EHO's intention to carry out inspect the works and view the certified plans. In this case the conventional septic tank must not be covered until the EHO has attended and viewed the installation and the "notification" plans onsite; indicated that work can continue; or failed by a substantial period to meet the agreed time for inspection.

If the conventional septic tank installation is not to the EHO's satisfaction (in accordance with the Code), then the process reverts to a DHF Approval to install a conventional septic tank (\$400.00 fee as detailed in Fact Sheet No. 510)

**CONTACTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

Email: [envirohealth@nt.gov.au](mailto:envirohealth@nt.gov.au)

Website (Code, Forms & Fact Sheets): [www.nt.gov.au/health/envirohealth](http://www.nt.gov.au/health/envirohealth) > waste management

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<p><b>BARKLY</b> Health Development Building Cnr Schmidt &amp; Windley Sts, Tennant Creek PO Box 346 TENNANT CREEK NT 0861 Phone: (08) 8962 4302 Fax: (08) 8962 4420</p>	<p><b>ALICE SPRINGS</b> Mwerre House 60 Hartley St, Alice Springs PO Box 721 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871 Phone: (08) 8955 6122 Fax: (08) 8952 5927</p>	<p><b>TIWI ISLANDS</b> Tiwi Health Services Block 4, Royal Darwin Hospital Rocklands Drive, Tiwi PO Box 40596 CASUARINA NT 0811 Phone: (08) 8922 8198 Fax: (08) 8922 7979</p>