

On-site sewerage systems

Homes not connected to Council's sewer network require an on-site sewerage facility, which are wastewater treatment systems for domestic sewage. The facilities treat and dispose of wastewater from the laundry, kitchen and bathrooms including sinks, showers, baths and toilets.

On-site sewerage systems can include:

- **Treatment plant** = in-ground tank/s
 - The treatment plant stores and treats the household wastewater.
- **Land application or disposal area** = location where treated wastewater is disposed of via either a:
 - Irrigation system
 - Absorption trench/bed

*Note: Must be contained within property boundaries
- **Greywater or sullage system** = disposes of domestic wastewater from Kitchens, showers & laundries
- **Grease trap** = small tank installed close to Kitchen to prevent grease entering trenches (requires cleaning every 3 – 6 months)

Types of on-site sewerage systems

The common types of facilities in use are Septic tanks (primary or basic treatment) and Treatment plants (secondary or higher treatment). The facility that is best suited to your property will depend on the environment where it is installed.



Who is responsible for my facility?

Under state plumbing legislation (Plumbing and Drainage Act), the owner is responsible for ensuring that the facility on their property is maintained and operating as intended. This includes ensuring other occupants, including tenants, are aware of any maintenance requirements.

What if I don't maintain my facility?

A facility that is not working properly can have a serious impact on people's health, your surroundings and the environment. There are also penalties for failure to maintain your facility.

How do I maintain my facility?

The maintenance requirements for your facility will depend on the type of treatment being used.

Septic Tanks

Depending on usage, a septic tank for an average home will need to be pumped out every three to five years. To monitor the build-up of waste matter in the bottom of the tank, a visual inspection is recommended every 12 months. For either an inspection or for pumping out you can engage a licensed plumber/drainier to do this, simply search for septic tank maintenance on the internet or **Yellow Pages** directory.

Sewage Treatment Plants

These facilities require regular servicing by a licensed service agent who will monitor the mechanical operation of the plant and the quality of the treated wastewater. Service requirements will depend on the type of system installed but are generally every 3 months.

The service agent is required by State legislation to provide the results of every service to both the property owner and Council. To find a licenced wastewater service agent, search for wastewater service agents in Bundaberg Region on the internet or **Yellow Pages** directory.

Council may contact you if a service report has not been received within the normal service interval.



To maintain the efficiency of your septic system here are a few tips to assist you:

Do

- Carry out regular maintenance of your system using an approved servicing agent. It is an offence if your system is not maintained regularly by an approved service agent.
- Use only biodegradable products recommended for on-site sewerage systems (e.g. bicarb soda as a cleaner for bathrooms and toilets).
- Avoid contact with the effluent and irrigation sprays
- Call your service agent when you are encountering problems with your system such as alarms and/or smells from the on-site sewerage facility.
- Conserve water and avoid overloading the system. Fix leaking taps and running toilets as soon as they are discovered.
- Use toilet paper that disintegrates easily.
- Keep a detailed record about your treatment plant, including model number, service agent, records of service visits, maintenance performed and part replacements. The Australian Standards require that this information is available at the property where the facility is located.
- Ensure that the disposal area in your yard is clearly identified.
- Become familiar with how your own particular system operates and the way it looks, sounds and smells when it is working correctly. This way, you may be able to identify problems before they become serious and alert your service agent to anything unusual.
- Ensure your on-site sewerage facility tank lids are properly sealed to prevent entry of mosquitoes and other vermin.

Don't

- Put food scraps, milk or oil down the sink.
- Dispose of any product containing ammonia, acids, disinfectants or bleaches into the system as it will kill the bacteria which operate the system.
- Allow roof or surface water to enter the system as it will overload the system.
- Allow foreign objects such as plastic or rubber products, cloth, rags, nappy wipes, sanitary napkins, bones, metal, glass and tea leaves or coffee grounds to enter the system as it may cause blockages.
- Switch off the system to save power.
- Cover tanks with earth, concrete, pavers, pine bark, mulch or other materials which could interfere with access for maintenance or enter the tank when lids are opened.
- Allow anyone to park on or drive over any part of the system.
- Allow effluent to dispose onto neighbouring properties, gutters or into waterways.
- Make or allow unauthorised repairs or alterations to your system without approval from Council.
- Use garbage grinders unless the on-site sewerage facility is designed to cope with this waste.
- Put any chemicals (such as paints, thinners, pesticides etc) into the sink as these items can destroy the bacterial digestion process in your system, resulting in the discharge of polluted effluent

Our commitment to you

Bundaberg Regional Council's Water Services team are committed to providing a safe, reliable water and wastewater service that meets the needs of our customers and respects the natural environment.

Sewage Treatment Plants

Council's Water Services / Plumbing Compliance Team are available to provide advice on any on-site sewerage facility and how it should be maintained. For further information please contact Council's Call Centre on 1300 883 699 You can also visit QLD Government Department of Housing Website.

