

PLUMBING SERVICES ONSITE SEWAGE FACILITIES



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Brisbane City Council is committed to keeping Brisbane clean, green and sustainable. This fact sheet has been developed to help property owners and tenants find information about maintaining their onsite sewage facilities.

Council recognises that achieving quality outcomes in a timely manner relies on working together with our customers. This fact sheet provides information about onsite sewage facilities, who is responsible for your facility and maintenance tips to assist you in the health of your facility.

What is an onsite sewage facility?

If your home is not able to connect to the sewer network, an onsite sewage facility will be required to treat and dispose of the wastewater from your sinks, showers, baths and toilets. These facilities usually comprise at least one in-ground tank and a disposal area in your yard where the treated wastewater is released below the surface.

Are there different types?

Yes. The common types of facilities in use are septic tanks (primary or basic treatment) and treatment plants (secondary or higher treatment). Both types effectively treat wastewater. 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 Queensland Government plumbing legislation, 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.

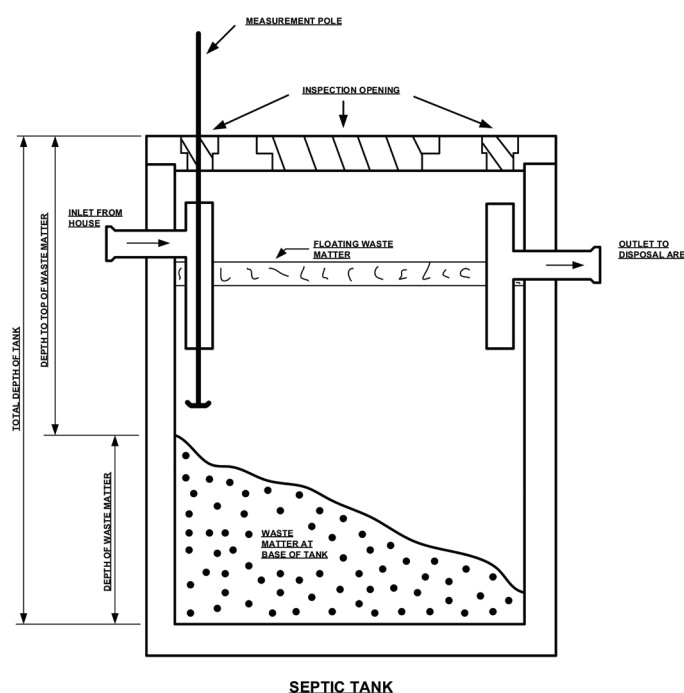
Septic tanks

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. You can either engage a licensed plumber/drainier to do this or you can do this yourself by following the diagram below. If the waste matter is more than 2/3 of the volume of the tank your tank needs pumping out. To find a local operator to pump out your tank, search for septic tank cleaning 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.

CHECKING THE DEPTH OF WASTE MATTER WITHIN A SEPTIC TANK



The service agent is required by Queensland Government legislation to provide the results of every service to both the property owner and Council. To find a licensed wastewater service agent, search for wastewater service agents in Brisbane on the internet or [Yellow Pages](#) directory. Council may contact you if a service report has not been received within the normal service interval.

Here are a few important tips to assist you in maintaining the health of your facility:

Do's

- ✓ Do carry out regular maintenance on the facility by a licensed servicing agent.
- ✓ Do take the time to understand the type of treatment facility installed on your property and its required maintenance.
- ✓ Only use biodegradable products (e.g. household cleaning products, toilet paper).
- ✓ Become familiar with the types of household products that are safe to discharge into the facility.
- ✓ Use water saving devices and stagger the discharge from washing machines, spa's etc., to reduce the amount of water that may overload the facility for a short period of time.
- ✓ Ensure that the disposal area in your yard is clearly identified.
- ✓ Ensure that all lids to the treatment facility are securely fixed.
- ✓ Ensure that the disposal area is not currently or will not be in a shaded area. Shade will affect the operation of the facility.

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not allow foreign items like nappies, cloths, personal hygiene products or other similar items to discharge into the facility.
- ✗ Do not allow fats, oils, food scraps, chemicals, ammonia, high-level phosphorous products, pesticides etc. (disposal units) to discharge into the facility.
- ✗ Do not allow anyone to use the disposal area for personal recreation including parking vehicles or storing equipment.
- ✗ Do not allow roof or surface water to enter the facility or discharge over the disposal area.

Finally, refer to the manufacturer's guidelines for further information.

What is the penalty if I don't maintain my facility?

To ensure that onsite wastewater treatment systems are operating correctly, local governments have the ability under the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018* (section 70) to issue a penalty infringement notice of 20 penalty units to a person who operates a non-compliant onsite sewage facility. The owner of the property must always ensure that plumbing and drainage installed on their property is kept in good condition and operates properly.

Our commitment to you

Council's Plumbing Services team are available to provide advice on your facility and how it should be maintained.

Further information

For further information about plumbing and drainage assessment, and compliance fees at residential properties, call 3403 8888.

You can also visit [Queensland Government Department of Housing and Public Works](#).

For specific questions about a treatment plant, contact the manufacturer.

Disclaimer: The content of this document has been developed to provide general advice and information for onsite sewage facilities. Brisbane City Council expressly disclaims all liability for errors and omissions of any kind whatsoever whether negligent or otherwise for any loss, damage, injury or other consequences that may arise from reliance on this publication.

