

REMOVAL OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS

The abandonment of an old septic system shall be accomplished in accordance with MN Rule 7080.2500 and the MPCA's fact sheet on system abandonment. There are no permits required for the removal of the septic system at the time of demolition of a house or connection to sanitary sewer. However, there are requirements that must be satisfied to protect human health and the environment.

At a minimum the tank(s) used in a septic system will be required to have all liquid removed and disposed by a licensed septic maintenance business. All electrical devices must be removed and disposed according to applicable regulations. All tank(s) shall be removed or properly abandoned in place by crushing and filling. During the demolition phase of the tanks, an inspection may be required to insure the proper sewage tank abandonment. At a minimum the demolition of the tanks requires documentation on the MPCA Tank Abandonment Form that is submitted to the County. The County does not require a SSTS permit for this work.

Construction materials utilized to construct the drainfield portion of a sewage treatment system may be removed according to the steps below without a conditional use permit; which would normally be required in a shoreland area according to the Shoreland Ordinance. Top soil (fill) may be replaced to restore the original ground contours where the system was installed. Any additional placement or removal of soil or fill material, not in direct conjunction with construction of the sanitary sewer system or abandonment of existing sewage treatment systems, may necessitate obtaining a Conditional Use Permit as required by the County Shoreland Ordinance.

If the property owner so chooses, the in-ground, at-grade or mound drainfield may remain in place on the property without further mitigation. It is anticipated that most in-ground drainfields will be left in place. All former drainfield locations that remain on a property are required to be considered for setback distance for a new well under MN Rule 4725.4450.

In situations where the property owner desires to remove the in-ground, at-grade or mound drainfield, the following recommendations must be followed.

REMOVAL OF IN-GROUND, AT-GRADE & MOUND DRAINFIELDS

- 1) It is recommended that when sewage tanks are pumped for proper abandonment, the excess sewage effluent (liquid) from drainfields also be removed, where feasible, to accelerate the drying out process. There should be little if any "free" product in a mound or at-grade installation, however there may be significant liquid in an in-ground drainfield.
- 2) Prior to removal of any type of "drainfield," the system must be allowed a drying out period of sixty (60) days or longer before removal to ensure that no liquid sewage effluent is present. This will minimize the potential for direct human contact with any sewage and help prevent spills or leakage on both private property and public roadways.

- 3) Dry clean top soil (soil not in direct contact with sewage effluent) may be salvaged from the system for re-contouring the sewage treatment site. This material would be located above the distribution media (usually rock) in a mound or at-grade.
- 4) The geo-textile fabric and distribution piping or synthetic media must be removed, dried and disposed of at a permitted sanitary landfill as municipal solid waste. This material must not be mixed with the soil if the soil is to be reused or spread.
- 5) The distribution media, if rock, must be hauled off site for burial or stockpiling in a remote location to minimize human exposure to potential pathogens and allow for pathogen die-off. Reuse of the product must meet the stipulations found in *MR 7080.2500 Subp. 3. Removal of system.*
 - A. *Contaminated materials disposed of off-site must be disposed of according to part 7080.2450, subpart 6.*
 - B. *If contaminated material is to be spread or used on-site within one year of contact with sewage, the material must be placed in an area meeting the soil and setback requirements described in part 7080.2150, subparts 2, item F, Table VII, and 3, item C, and the material must be covered with a minimum of six inches of uncontaminated soil and protected from erosion. After one year following contact with sewage, the material is allowed to be spread in any location meeting the setback requirement of part 4725.4450, covered with a minimum of six inches of uncontaminated soil, and protected from erosion. After one year following contact with sewage, the material is allowed to be used to fill in the abandoned in-place sewage tanks.*
- 6) Sand from treatment systems must be moved offsite for burial, stockpiling or spreading on agricultural fields (soil incorporation). Spreading or Reuse of the product must meet stipulations in 7080.2500 as referenced above.
- 7) A minimum of six (6) inches of clean salvaged or new top soil shall be placed over the sewage treatment area and the area reseeded.
- 8) Partial removal of mound material may be allowed but the remaining sand, left in place, must be immediately covered with six (6) inches of clean topsoil, reseeded and protected from erosion. This shall not be construed as an approval to haul in large amounts of fill to reshape or re-contour the property.

7080.2500 SYSTEM ABANDONMENT.

Subpart 1. Tank abandonment.

All systems with no future intent for use must be abandoned according to this part. Tank abandonment procedures for sewage tanks, cesspools, leaching pits, drywells, seepage pits, vault privies, and pit privies must meet the requirements in items A to C.

A. All solids and liquids must be removed and disposed of according to part 7080.2450, subpart 6, by a licensed maintenance business.

B. All electrical devices and devices containing mercury must be removed and disposed of according to applicable regulations.

C. Abandoned tanks or any other underground cavities must be removed or remain in place and crushed with the remaining cavity filled with soil or rock material.

Subp. 2. Future discharge. *Access for future discharge to the system must be permanently denied.*

Subp. 3. Removal of system.

If soil treatment and dispersal systems are removed, contaminated materials shall be properly handled to prevent human contact. Contaminated materials include distribution media, soil or sand within three feet of the system bottom, distribution pipes, tanks, and contaminated soil around leaky tanks. Contaminated material also includes any soil that received sewage from a surface failure. Contaminated materials must be disposed of according to items A to D.

A. Contaminated materials disposed of off-site must be disposed of according to part 7080.2450, subpart 6.

B. If contaminated material is to be spread or used on-site within one year of contact with sewage, the material must be placed in an area meeting the soil and setback requirements described in part 7080.2150, subparts 2, item F, Table VII, and 3, item C, and the material must be covered with a minimum of six inches of uncontaminated soil and protected from erosion. After one year following contact with sewage, the material is allowed to be spread in any location meeting the setback requirement of part 4725.4450, covered with a minimum of six inches of uncontaminated soil, and protected from erosion. After one year following contact with sewage, the material is allowed to be used to fill in the abandoned in-place sewage tanks.

C. Contaminated pipe, geotextile fabric, or other material must be dried and disposed of in a mixed municipal solid waste landfill.

D. The person or business abandoning the system must complete and sign a record of abandonment that states the system was abandoned according to this part. The record must be sent to the local unit of government within 90 days of abandonment.



Abandoning a Subsurface Sewage Treatment System

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This fact sheet provides the rule requirements and suggested guidelines for proper abandonment of a Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS).

Who can abandon a system?

Removal and disposal of the liquid contents in sewage tanks must be conducted by a licensed maintainer. Remaining abandonment activities, such as crushing and filling the tanks, must follow the provisions of Minn. R. 7080.2500; however, they may be performed by other contractors.

The person or business abandoning the system must complete and sign a record of abandonment, which then must be sent to the local government unit within 90 days of the abandonment date.

Must an abandoned system be disclosed at property transfer?

Yes. Minn. Stat. § 115.55, subd. 6(2) requires an abandoned system be disclosed to the buyer prior to signing an agreement to sell or transfer property. The disclosure must include a map showing the system location.

What are the abandonment options?

A SSTS can be abandoned in place, or it can be removed from the site.

Abandoning a system in place

If the removed septage is disposed of into a sewage or septage treatment facility, a written agreement must exist between the accepting facility and the maintenance business responsible for disposal.

If the removed septage is disposed through land application, follow your local government's ordinance requirements. If no local septage ordinance exists, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Septage Management Guidelines contains necessary information on required state and federal land application methods and septage management.

The soil dispersal system (i.e. drainfield) can remain in place. Inspection pipes can be removed, backfilled, and disposed of in a mixed municipal solid waste landfill.

Sewage tanks, cesspools, leaching pits, drywells, seepage pits, vault privies, pit privies, and distribution devices must:

- have all solids and liquids (i.e. septage) removed and disposed of in accordance with Minn. R. 7080.2450, subp. 6 by a licensed maintenance business
- have all electrical devices and devices containing mercury removed and disposed of according to applicable regulations; and
- abandoned tanks or any other underground cavities must be crushed with the remaining cavity filled with soil or rock material

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Future discharge into the system

Access for future discharge to the system must be permanently denied. This can be accomplished by removing the piping or filling the end of the supply pipe with grout.

Removal of abandoned systems

Precautions must be taken to prevent human contact with the contaminated materials. These include the distribution media, the surrounding soil or sand materials within a three foot distance of the system bottom, distribution pipes, the sewage tanks and any contaminated soil around leaky sewage tanks. Contaminated material also includes any soil that received sewage from a surfacing effluent.

Contaminated distribution piping, manifold, geotextile fabric, and other materials must be dried and disposed of in a mixed municipal solid waste landfill; they cannot be disposed of in a demolition landfill.

Contaminated soil material may be stockpiled prior to final disposal to allow time for pathogen die-off. The stockpiling site must meet all the separation distances for an SSTS, including **well and property line setbacks** and a three-foot vertical separation distance to periodically saturated soil or bedrock. Additionally, the stockpiled material must be covered with a minimum of six inches of uncontaminated soil and be protected from erosion. The local unit of government should be contacted for any additional or stricter ordinance requirements.

After the soil material has been stockpiled for a minimum of one year, it may be land applied in any location meeting the setback requirements of Minn. R. 4725.4450, covered with at least six inches of uncontaminated soil, and be protected from erosion. It may also be used to fill in the abandoned tank cavities.

Do you need more information?

For more information on the MPCA's SSTS program, please visit our Web site at www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/ists/ or call us at 651-296-6300, or toll free at 800-657-3864.