



# Flushed with success

*a guide to keeping your on-site wastewater system authorised*

# A guide to keeping your on-site wastewater system authorised

*The information contained within this booklet will assist you in ensuring your on-site wastewater system continues to be authorised once it has been installed. This authorisation together with your authorisation from your District or City Council will allow you to install and use your system, but you have on-going obligations to keep your system authorised.*

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# SECTION ONE

*Steps to a fully authorised system*

*Installation of system*

*Certificate of Construction*

*Maintain the system*

*Your fully authorised system*

# Steps to a fully authorised system

## Installation of system

Now that you have received your permitted activity confirmation or been granted your resource consent and have authorisation from your City or District Council, you may have your on-site wastewater system constructed and installed. This **MUST** be carried out in accordance with the design plans submitted to and approved by Environment Canterbury.

## Certificate of Construction

The Certificate of Construction (Producer Statement) ensures that a suitably qualified and experienced person installed your on-site wastewater system in accordance with the design plans submitted to, and approved by, Environment Canterbury. You will find an example certificate on the following page to be used by your installer if they do not have their own. Please file your Certificate of Construction in this booklet or in a secure location and send a copy to Environment Canterbury.

**It is your responsibility to send the certificate to us.** This is a condition of your permitted activity confirmation or resource consent. Your on-site wastewater system will not be fully authorised until this is completed. Failure to send in your Certificate of Construction can lead to monitoring and/or enforcement charges related to the time spent by Environment Canterbury tracking down the required certificate. Mail your Certificate of Construction as soon as the work is completed to:

Attention: RMA Compliance and Enforcement Manager  
Environment Canterbury  
PO Box 345  
Christchurch 8140

## Maintain the system

Maintenance of your on-site wastewater system is a condition of your permitted activity confirmation or resource consent. As part of your authorisation, you are required to keep copies of maintenance records to be made available to Environment Canterbury upon request.

Failure to maintain the system can lead to monitoring and/or enforcement charges. Please review your permitted activity authorisation or resource consent for your specific maintenance requirements. See Section Two of this booklet for a basic guide to maintenance and preventative care of your on-site wastewater system.

## Your fully authorised system

Your system will be fully authorised by Environment Canterbury when:

- the on-site wastewater system has been installed in accordance with the design plans submitted to and approved by Environment Canterbury,
- the Certificate of Construction is sent to Environment Canterbury and
- the wastewater system is regularly maintained.

Please be sure to review the conditions of your authorisation. Your authorisation is a legal document that outlines your responsibilities as a permitted activity or resource consent holder.

# CERTIFICATE OF CONSTRUCTION ON-SITE WASTEWATER SYSTEM

ISSUED BY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(INSTALLATION COMPANY'S NAME)

TO:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(CONSENT or PERMITTED ACTIVITY HOLDER)

*COPY TO BE SUPPLIED TO: Attention: RMA Compliance and Enforcement Manager  
Environment Canterbury, PO Box 345, Christchurch 8140*

IN RESPECT OF RESOURCE CONSENT OR PERMITTED ACTIVITY NO: CRC \_\_\_\_\_

BUILDING CONSENT NO: \_\_\_\_\_

PROPERTY ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Property on which on-site wastewater system has been installed)*

PROPERTY LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

*Installer Details*

INSTALLER'S NAME:

COMPANY NAME:

ADDRESS:

TOWN/CITY:

PHONE:

EMAIL:

I \_\_\_\_\_, duly authorised agent of

\_\_\_\_\_  
(INSTALLER'S NAME)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(COMPANY NAME)

have read and fully understand the relevant conditions of CRC \_\_\_\_\_

and certify that this on-site wastewater system has been constructed and installed in accordance with these conditions as well as the approved design plans attached to the authorisation.

INSTALLATION DATE:

INSTALLER'S SIGNATURE:

DATE:

# SECTION TWO

*Caring for my on-site wastewater system*

*Maintenance and maintenance records*

*Preventative care*

*Substitutes for household cleaning chemicals*

*Sample maintenance report*

*Maintenance records*

# Caring for my on-site wastewater system

An on-site wastewater system should, with proper care and maintenance, provide many years of service. However, you must take an active role in ensuring the wastewater system functions properly. The manufacturer of your wastewater treatment unit should provide you with specific instructions on inspection and cleaning requirements. Check the local Yellow Pages under “Septic Tank Services” or “Sewerage Treatment” for a service contractor near you.

## Maintenance and maintenance records

The table below provides guidance on the servicing requirements for common on-site wastewater systems installed in the Canterbury region.

<i>Guide to on-site wastewater servicing requirements</i>	<i>Septic Tank to Sand Trench</i>	<i>Aerated System to Drip Irrigation</i>
Measure depth of sludge & scum in tanks and pump out tank when sludge & scum layers are greater than 2/3 of the depth of the tank.	√	√
Inspect effluent filter and clean if necessary by banging on the ground to remove any excess solids. A biofilm (layer of scum) must remain on the filter to ensure adequate filtration.	√	√
Check pump and float switches are working and replace pump when required.	√	√
Flush distribution lines until water runs clear and then pressure test.	√	
Check the drip irrigation lines/self-flushing drip irrigation lines are working and replace drip lines as required.		√
Check to see if vegetative cover above land application system is in a healthy state.	√	√
Check for visible signs of wastewater ponding on the ground surface.	√	√

You are required to forward a copy of the written maintenance reports and records of all repairs to Environment Canterbury, if requested to do so. A maintenance report must be prepared by the service contractor and kept by the homeowner following any maintenance and/or repairs of your on-site wastewater system.

The report should include details of the maintenance and repair work, the date works were undertaken and the name of the company and person undertaking the work. An example maintenance report and record is included on page 7 and 8, which can be used by your service contractor if they do not have their own forms.

## Preventative care

The 'Dos and Don'ts' that follow are meant as a *general* guide to good practice for the operation of your on-site wastewater system to reduce the likelihood of failure; they do not represent legal requirements by Environment Canterbury. Your consultant should be able to provide you with a more detailed manual specific to the care and maintenance required by your system. Reducing the likelihood of failure will reduce costs to yourself, others in your community and the environment.

### *DO*

- **Avoid excessive water use.** Excessive water use reduces the retention time in your wastewater treatment unit and could overload the land application system
- **Use bio-degradable soaps and cleaners.** While conservative use of household drain solvents, cleaners, disinfectants etc. should not interfere with the operation of your on-site wastewater system, where possible use phosphate free/low phosphorus based laundry detergents and, where appropriate low sodium content to reduce contaminant loads on the environment. Check all your cleaning products to see if they are suitable for your wastewater system.
- **Scrape all plates and dishes** to remove as much fat and grease as possible. Clean with paper towels and place in the rubbish.
- **Report/fix all leaking taps** as soon as possible.
- **Ensure a good vegetative cover** is maintained in the area of your land application system. Talk to your consultant about what vegetation is best.
- **Direct all surface water** away from the land application system, including roof drains and lawn sprinklers.

### *DON'T*

- **Don't pour toxic/strong chemicals or cleaners down any drains.** This includes fuels, paints, thinners, grease, oil, chemical drain cleaning products, weed or insect killers, drugs, chlorine cleaners or disinfectant based products.
- **Don't use large amounts of cleaning products.**
- **Don't flush solids down the toilet** other than standard toilet paper. The majority of on-site wastewater systems are not designed to tolerate solid matter such as cigarette butts, condoms, paper towels, nappies, sanitary pads, tampons etc. Do not dispose of these into your wastewater system unless the manufacturer has confirmed the system can accept them. The accumulation of solids will, over time, reduce your systems efficiency and increase maintenance costs.
- **Don't wash all your laundry in one day.**
- **Don't install in-sink garbage grinders.** Unless your on-site wastewater system has been specifically designed for one, do not use a garbage grinder as sludge accumulation can be increased by up to forty percent requiring the tank to be pumped out more frequently.
- **Don't put coffee grounds down the sink.**
- **Don't allow vehicles/stock onto the land application system.** All vehicles and stock should be kept away from the area, as pipes can be damaged and compaction of the soil reduces the performance of the system.

## Substitutes for household cleaning chemicals

The manufacturer of your wastewater treatment unit or your consultant should provide you with specific instructions regarding what household cleaning chemicals can and can't be used. The table below is included for completeness only and does not represent legal requirements by Environment Canterbury.

GENERAL CLEANERS	Use soft soap cleaners and bio-degradable cleaners and those low in chlorine levels.
AMMONIA-BASED CLEANERS	Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge. For windows, use a solution of 2-Tbs white vinegar to 1-litre of water. Pour the mixture into a spray bottle.
DISINFECTANTS	Use borax (sodium borate): ½ cup in 4-litres of water.
DRAIN DECLOGGERS	Avoid de-clogging chemicals. Instead use a plunger or metal snake, or remove and clean trap.
SCOURING CLEANERS AND POWDERS	Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge or add 4-Tbs baking soda to 1-litre warm water. It's cheaper and won't scratch.
TOILET CLEANERS	Sprinkle on baking soda, then scrub with toilet brush.
LAUNDRY DETERGENT	Choose one with a zero phosphate content and low in alkaline salts (in particular, low sodium level) and no chlorine.
CARPET/UPHOLSTERY CLEANERS	Sprinkle dry cornstarch or baking soda on stain, or use commercial dry cleaning spray, then vacuum. For tougher stains, blot with white vinegar in soapy water.
FURNITURE/FLOOR POLISHES	To clean, use oil soap and warm water. Dry with soft cloth. Polish with 1 part lemon juice to 2 parts oil (any kind) or use natural products with lemon oil or beeswax in mineral oil.
METAL CLEANERS	Brass and copper: scrub with a used half of lemon dipped in salt. Stainless steel: scouring pad and soapy water. Silver: rub gently with toothpaste and wet cloth.
OVEN CLEANERS	Sprinkle salt on drips, then scrub. Use baking soda and scouring pads on older spills.

*There are different on-site wastewater systems available and each system will have specific requirements for maintenance. Please operate your system, at all times, in accordance with the manufacturer and designer's instructions. Please ensure that you are given the instructions at the time of, or before, installation.*

## Sample Maintenance Report

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_

CRC Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Maintenance checklist

#### *Septic tank to sand trench*

1. Measure sludge & scum  Emptied: YES NO  
Depth: \_\_\_\_\_ (eg 1/3, 1/2, 2/3)
2. Check effluent filter  Cleaned: YES NO
3. Check pump and float switches  Replaced: YES NO
4. Flushing & pressure testing lines  Replaced: YES NO

#### *Aerated treatment to drip line irrigation*

1. Measure sludge & scum  Emptied: YES NO  
Depth: \_\_\_\_\_ (eg 1/3, 1/2, 2/3)
2. Check effluent filter  Cleaned: YES NO
3. Check pump and float switches  Replaced: YES NO
4. Check irrigation lines  Replaced: YES NO Flushed: YES NO

Other maintenance: \_\_\_\_\_

Observations: \_\_\_\_\_

Repairs: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_



# SECTION THREE

*Moving on: selling up*

*Glossary*

## Moving on: selling up

Your on-site wastewater discharge permitted activity confirmation or resource consent, the Certificate of Construction, the specifications and site plan must be kept in a safe place.

These are to be given to the new owner if the property is sold. A Transfer of Ownership form must also be completed. One of these forms can be obtained from the Environment Canterbury website ([www.ecan.govt.nz](http://www.ecan.govt.nz)) or Environment Canterbury Customer Services on 0800 324 636.

If your mailing address changes you may use the same form to inform us of your new address, so that any correspondence from us regarding your system will reach you.

## Glossary

Desludging	Removal of accumulated sludge and scum from a wastewater treatment unit.
Effluent filter	Also known as an outlet filter. A removable cleanable device inserted into the outlet piping of the wastewater treatment unit designed to trap solids, preventing them being transported to the land application system where they may cause blockages.
Land application system	The system used to apply wastewater from a wastewater treatment unit into land for further in-soil treatment and absorption.
On-site wastewater system	The collection, treatment and discharge of wastewater from an individual home or commercial facility on the same property as it is being generated.
Scum	The floating mass of wastewater solids buoyed up by gases, grease or other substances which form a layer on the liquid surface inside the wastewater treatment unit.
Sludge	The semi liquid solids settled from wastewater.
Wastewater	Means liquid wastes (including matter in solution or suspension therein) discharged from premises used solely for residential purposes, or wastes of the same character discharged from other premises; but does not include any solids, liquids, or gases that may not lawfully be discharged into sewers controlled by a local authority. For the purpose of this authorisation domestic wastewater shall also include effluent from dog kennels and catteries.
Wastewater treatment unit	Any tank used in the treatment of wastewater before being discharged. Includes primary treatment systems and secondary treatment systems.

Thank you to the Auckland Regional Council for granting Environment Canterbury permission to use some material from their Technical Publication No.58.



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