

Information for Businesses:

My business is on a septic system. What should I do?

- Keep wastewater that may contain chemicals and other hazardous and toxic substances separated from human sewage.
- Place chemical wastes in properly labeled holding containers for appropriate storage, handling, and disposal.
- Contract with a licensed company that properly hauls, disposes and/or treats chemical wastes.
- Obtain information on hazardous waste management by visiting the Department of Ecology's website at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/business.html>
- Have a septic system routinely inspected by a certified O & M specialist, as required by Clark County Code.
- **DO NOT** discharge chemical wastes into sinks, toilets, floor drains, or storm drains.

Property owners can protect themselves and their investments by educating tenants and demanding they operate a clean and responsible business. Adherence to regulatory requirements can be included as a condition of a lease. Routine inspections are also recommended since the property owner is ultimately responsible for any pollution originating on their property.

What are the risks of putting chemicals into the septic system?

Liability: The Model Toxics Control Act (WAC 173-340) identifies the property owner and the business operator as responsible for the environmental contamination and its cleanup costs. However, the property owner is the primary party held responsible for cleanup.

Legal issues: Soil and groundwater pollution can cross property boundaries resulting in litigation with many parties, and legal action by local, state, and federal authorities.

Financial Issues: Environmental cleanup is very costly and can carry on for many years. Septic system decommissioning, public sewer connection, and/or new septic system installation costs can add up to a large financial burden.

Health Risks: Chemical wastes in sewage pose health and safety risks to the business employees, septic tank pumpers, and the disposal facility employees. Polluted groundwater can pose serious public health risks to those who depend on wells as their source of drinking water.

The information in this brochure was developed from information provided by the Interagency Resource for Achieving Cooperation's (IRAC) On-Site Sewage Workgroup.



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ON-SITE SEPTIC SYSTEMS FOR BUSINESSES:

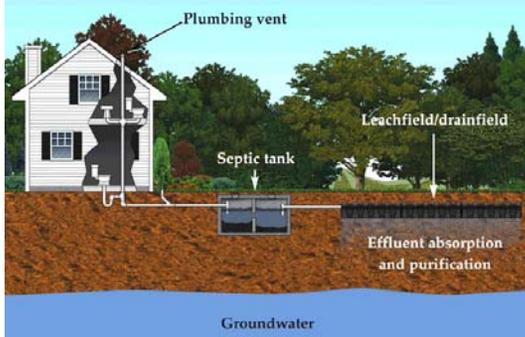
Information for Business Users & Property Owners



CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

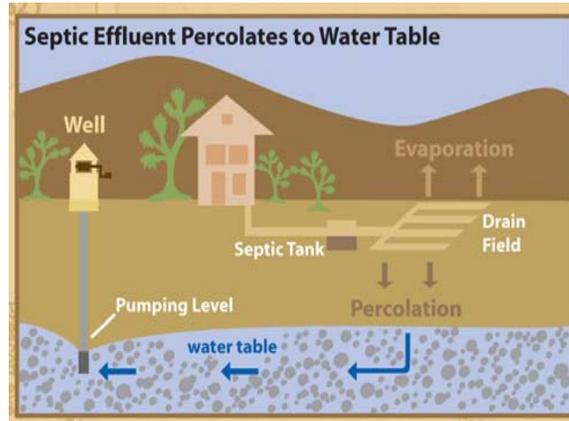
Many areas in urban and rural Clark County are not served by public sewer systems that transport sewage to treatment plants.

Instead, many homes and businesses are connected to on-site septic systems for onsite sewage treatment. These septic tank systems are designed to only treat sewage from toilets, showers, sinks, dishwashers, laundry washers, and other plumbing fixtures. Chemical wastes, or non-human waste, must **never** be put into a septic tank system. This may cause health, legal, and environmental problems resulting in serious consequences.



What is an on-site septic system and how does it work?

- An on-site septic system is an underground holding tank that receives sewage for onsite treatment.
- Bacteria inside the tank break down the waste anaerobically (without oxygen).
- Liquid then flows to a drainfield and is released into the soil for further treatment and eventually filters down to groundwater.
- The solids in the tank settle and must be occasionally removed by a certified septic system pumper. The pumped solids are then taken to an approved disposal facility.



What problems can occur with on-site septic systems?

While septic systems are designed to receive and treat sewage, the addition of chemicals and toxic substances is harmful to public health & the environment and violates federal, state, and local laws.

For example, chemicals will disturb the bacteria in the septic tank, preventing proper treatment of the waste, causing the waste to pollute soil and groundwater (i.e. drinking water). In several cases, this has caused serious soil and groundwater pollution that pose a risk to the public's health. Pollution clean up can be very expensive.

How is sewage from a business different than a household?

There should be no difference. Sewage from toilets, showers, kitchen sinks, hand sinks, dishwashers, and laundry washers is easy for the bacteria in a septic tank to digest and treat.

Some businesses and industries produce non-sewage wastes from their commercial activities. **These wastes are never allowed**

into an on-site septic system. Some common examples are: automotive fluids, dry cleaning solvents, inks and solvents from printing processes, metals from photo processing water, wastes from electroplating processes, veterinary and medical pharmaceuticals, amalgam wastes from dental offices, paints and thinners, mop and cleanup water from spills and processing areas, boilers, shop floor drains, etc.

County and state regulations prohibit the discharge of industrial and commercial wastes into an on-site septic system. When chemical wastes are found in a septic tank, Clark County Public Health requires the system to be decommissioned. Connection to public sewer or a new on-site septic system is then required. Also, civil and/or criminal penalties for illegal waste disposal can be imposed.



The discharge of industrial & commercial wastes into an on-site septic system violates federal, state, and local laws.