

## What if there is a sewer nearby?

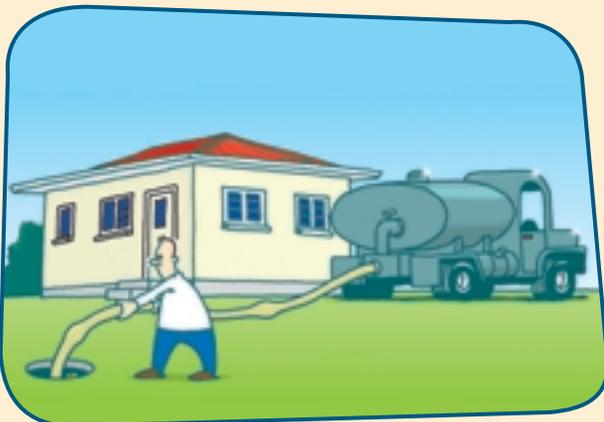
If there is a sewer nearby, then you cannot use an on-site sewage system. You must get your plumbing connected to the sewer. The Building Code requires all households to be connected to a sewer unless there is no sewer available.

## What if you're a landlord or you want to sell?

The Health Act, 1956 prohibits you from selling or letting a property that doesn't comply with the Building Code and the Building Act. If there is no sewer available, this means you must have an "adequate" on-site sewage system.

## Sludge removal

Every person who removes and disposes of sludge from on-site sewage systems must have the written approval of the Medical Officer of Health.



## Other brochures in this series

- \* What's going on in your sewage system.
- \* Four helpful hints about looking after on-site sewage.

### Want to know more? These are the people to ask..

#### KAPITI COAST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Environmental Protection ..... 04 298 5139

#### PORIRUA CITY COUNCIL

Environment and Regulatory Services..... 04 237 5089

#### WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Environment Control Business Unit ..... 04 499 4444

#### HUTT CITY COUNCIL

The Approvals Team ..... 04 570 6666

#### UPPER HUTT CITY COUNCIL

Technical Services Unit ..... 04 527 2170

#### SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

Plumbing & Drainage ..... 06 306 9611

#### CARTERTON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Building Department ..... 06 379 6626

#### MASTERTON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Environmental Health ..... 06 378 9666

#### WELLINGTON REGIONAL COUNCIL

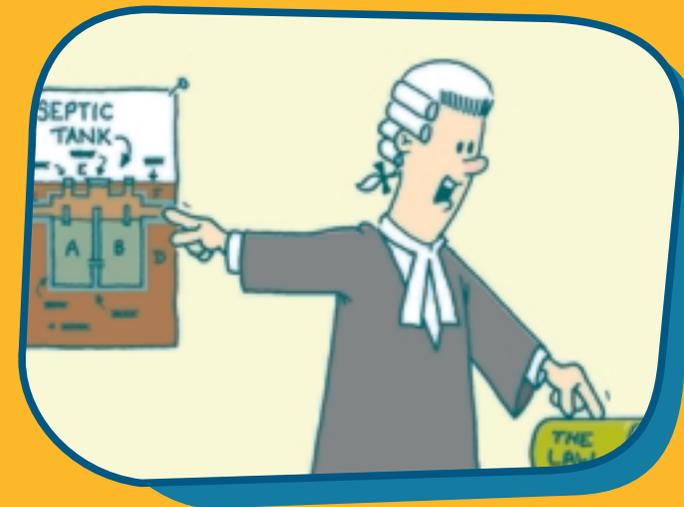
Consents Help Desk ..... 04 384 5708

Wairarapa ..... 06 378 2484

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# On-site sewage your legal responsibilities



After you've flushed the toilet, where does your sewage go? If you're in the country, it probably drains away somewhere in your backyard.

You might have a septic tank with a soakage treatment area, you might have a mini treatment plant, or you might just have a "long drop". Whatever you've got, you'd better be sure it's legal.

## What kind of permission do you need for your system?

A septic tank or a mini treatment plant is a 'structure' that has a 'discharge'. Structures must have a **building permit**.

### Building Permits

Building permits are issued by District and City Councils.

Among other things, the **Building Regulations, 1992** require your on-site sewage system to:

- transfer wastes from buildings safely and hygienically
- avoid the likelihood of foul air and gases entering buildings
- have adequate capacity for the volume of waste and the frequency of disposal
- avoid the likelihood of contamination of soils, ground water and waterways except as permitted by the **Resource Management Act 1991**

Ask the Building Inspector about the exact requirements for your plumbing system.

To be permitted by the **Resource Management Act 1991**, sewage discharges, no matter how small, must either:

- Comply with a **regional rule** in the Regional Plan for Discharges to Land for the Wellington Region, or
- Comply with a **discharge permit**

### Regional Rules

Sewage doesn't stay in the tank forever. The liquid part of it discharges to the environment.

If your sewage system discharges **to land**, the discharge must comply with **Rule 6** or **Rule 7** in the Regional Plan for Discharges to Land for the Wellington Region. If you have a long drop, it must comply with **Rule 5**. To find out about these rules, ask someone listed at the back of this pamphlet. If you can't comply with one of the rules, you'll need a discharge permit.

### Discharge Permits

The Wellington Regional Council checks whether the discharge complies with the rules or needs a discharge permit.

Every discharge of sewage to water in the Wellington Region requires a discharge permit. It doesn't matter if the water is in a river, lake, roadside drain or under the ground.

Discharges of sewage into soakholes, without treatment in an application area, go straight to groundwater and require a discharge permit.

**Most importantly, don't let sewage leak into a river or any other waterbody.**

## What about new subdivisions?

City and District Councils authorise all subdivision of land. If you want to subdivide a property, and there is no sewer available, the City or District Council will check that the effluent can be safely disposed of on the new lot when they assess your application. If it can't they might turn down the application, or they might grant the consent and attach conditions about effluent disposal to the consent.

## What can happen if your system doesn't comply

If your system doesn't comply with a regional rule, and you or the homeowner don't have a discharge permit, then the Wellington Regional Council can prosecute you under the **Resource Management Act, 1991**.

The person who can be prosecuted is the person causing the discharge. If you are renting your house, you are responsible for making sure the discharge from the tank complies with one of the rules.

Ask the people listed at the end of this pamphlet about the details of the on-site sewage rules.

District and City Councils can obtain a District Court Order under the Health Act requiring work to be carried out if an on-site sewage system causes a health hazard, or an offence to neighbours. The Council may require you to do the work at your own expense, or they can have the work done and recover costs from you.