

Understanding and taking care of your On-site Wastewater Management System (OWMS)

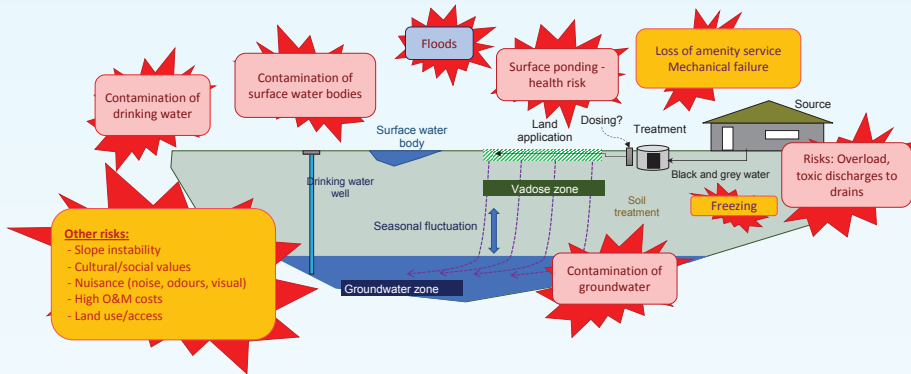


IN A NUTSHELL:

WHY SHOULD I UNDERSTAND AND CARE FOR MY OWMS?

The wastewater discharging from your dwelling is a hazardous material and it is your responsibility to make sure it is managed safely. If your on-site wastewater system is not working correctly, it will create risks for your family, your neighbours, your animals and your local environment. The consequences can be severe and potentially costly.

Potential risks from failing/substandard on-site wastewater management services

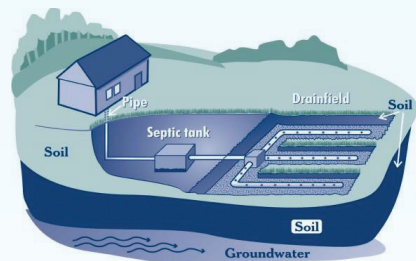


WHAT IS AN ON-SITE WASTEWATER SYSTEM (OWMS)?

An OWMS is made up of several key physical components, including a treatment unit, a dosing device, and a land application system. Some systems also include filters and an alarm.

You are likely to have one of four types of systems on your property:

- an old unknown septic tank system about which you have no or very little information
- an older style septic tank and soakage trench or soak hole system
- a new modern single or multi-chamber septic tank and land application system (such as dosed trenches, a sand bed or a mound)
- a new secondary or advanced treatment unit (such as an aerobic treatment plant, sand filter, or packed bed reactor) plus drip irrigation land application system.



Older style septic tank and soakage trench system



Modern septic tank, sand filter and drip irrigation field

LOOKING AFTER YOUR ON-SITE WASTEWATER SYSTEM

If you own an OWMS you should:

- understand the key components of your OWMS
- ensure all people who use your dwelling understand what can and can't be flushed into the system
- support the living ecology of your system by using biodegradable soaps and low-phosphorus detergents
- understand the maximum wastewater volume that your system has been designed for and ensure you don't overload your system
- ensure regular servicing of the OWMS by a suitably qualified servicing technician
- maintain a record of all servicing activities
- check on your system regularly and look out for signs of OWMS failure.



Ponding LAS

SIGNS THAT YOUR ON-SITE WASTEWATER SYSTEM IS FAILING

Your system may be failing if, for example:

- a foul, rotten-egg smell is noticed around your septic tank or land application area
- your tank overflows, perhaps through the vent
- the land around your treatment tanks and land application system (LAS) is ponding, soggy and odorous
- the filter(s) are blocking up too frequently
- your drains and toilets are running slowly or overflow
- there is a gurgling noise when the bath plug is pulled
- there is overflowing at the gully trap or tank mushroom
- power consumption is high
- an alarm is activated.



Drip line needs flushing



Clogged Filter

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

An extended guide to understanding and caring for your OWMS is available from the link below.

<https://www.waternz.org.nz/OWMScompleteguide>

Information on helping you choose an OWMS is available from the link below.

<https://www.waternz.org.nz/OWMSchoosing>

“Outstanding - probably the best OWMS guide you’ll read this year” -
Alan Ambury, OWMS User

water

NEW ZEALAND

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