

WORKING TOWARDS SAFE & RESPONSIBLE ON-SITE SEWAGE MANAGEMENT  
ON-SITE SEWAGE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION SERIES

THE DO's & DONT's OF  
OPERATING AN OSMS

This factsheet provides you with information relating to a number of do's and dont's of operating an OSMS.

THE DO's

- ✓ Repair any leaking taps and/or toilet cisterns as soon as possible.
- ✓ Use laundry detergents that are low in sodium. High levels of sodium will reduce the life of your disposal area and restrict plant growth.
- ✓ Conserve water – the more water you use, the more wastewater you have to treat and dispose of. Install shower flow restrictors, use front loading washing machines and reduce the water level on your washing machine when washing small loads (top load washing machine).
- ✓ Wash your laundry in stages and not all in one day. This will help to not flood your system.
- ✓ Check the OSMS and seek advice from Council or a licensed plumber when purchasing or moving to a property that is not connected to the sewer.
- ✓ Understand how your system works and seek immediate help if drains block, odours are evident or water is ponding in the disposal area.
- ✓ Keep a record of inspections (factsheet 13), services, desludging, filter cleaning, any maintenance carried out and dates related to your Approval to Operate.
- ✓ Ensuring that any rental tenants are aware of their responsibility to maintain the OSMS and make them aware of what they can do inside the house to help ensure you get the best results from the system.
- ✓ Ensure that the absorption trench or irrigation area are properly maintained and do not become overgrown with vegetation.
- ✓ Ensure any roof water and surface water is diverted away from the absorption trench or irrigation area.
- ✓ Ensure that your system is constructed 1.5m away from any buildings and 6m away from any boundaries, drainage channels, supply channels and any other water bodies.
- ✓ Use natural cleaning products such as bicarbonate soda and vinegar.
- ✓ Use kitchen sink strainers and lint filters in your laundry.
- ✓ Have a plumber fit an effluent filter to the septic tank outlet to keep solids in the tank and extend the life of your trenches.



## THE DONT'S

- ✘ Don't use caustic soda or drain cleaners to unblock pipes and drains.
- ✘ Don't pour fats, oils or grease down the sink.
- ✘ Don't leave taps running unnecessarily e.g. when brushing your teeth or washing dishes.
- ✘ Don't flush antibiotics or other medication or excessive amounts of chemicals such as bleach, nappy sanitiser, caustic chemicals, corrosive fluids or pesticides down the drain as they can destroy the bacteria that breaks down the wastewater.
- ✘ Don't use garbage disposal units or put food scraps down the drain.
- ✘ Don't flush nappies, tampons, condoms or other large items down the toilet as they can block drains and don't break down in the OSMS.
- ✘ Don't allow livestock, children, pets or vehicles to drive or park on disposal areas as they may damage them. Fencing of the disposal area may be required to restrict access whilst still maintaining inspection and service access.
- ✘ Don't use water from a bore located within 250 metres of a disposal area for drinking or food preparation as it may contain faecal contamination.
- ✘ Don't plant large trees in or too close to the disposal area as they can shade the area and the roots can damage the absorption trench or irrigation system.
- ✘ Don't cover your septic tank lid with vegetation or plants that will make it difficult to access for maintenance or inspections.
- ✘ Don't water fruit and vegetables with your effluent, as this can pose serious health risks.
- ✘ Don't allow effluent to pool on your property. Contact a plumber or service agent to fix the issue.
- ✘ Don't dispose of wastewater or effluent off your property.
- ✘ Don't try to make any repairs or pump your system out yourself. Use a licensed plumber, service agent or licensed pump out contractor.
- ✘ Don't allow wastewater or effluent to enter stormwater drains, water courses, drainage or supply channels or other water bodies as it contains material that can harm the environment and you may also be found guilty of committing an offence under the Protection of Environment Operations Act 1997.



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