

Homeowner Information - Advice for Selecting a Private Sewage System

1. A Private Sewage System does much more than make your sewage soak into the ground. The system treats the sewage to prevent the transmission of disease and prevents damage to the environment. Do not put the health of your family or neighbors at risk. Design, install and operate a Private Sewage System with care.

This page will help you to make informed decisions when deciding on the design and installation of a Private Sewage System that is right for your home. Traditional systems may use a septic tank with a disposal field but may not be best suited to your needs. Other technologies are available to provide treatment beyond the capability of a septic tank and can provide longer life and reduce any risk to health and the environment.

The design and installation of a Private Sewage System requires knowledge and skill. Numerous factors can affect the cost and performance of your system.

As the owner of a Private Sewage System it is your responsibility to ensure your system operates properly and safely. One of the first steps to making sure you have a system that operates safely, and gives you little trouble, is to make sure the design and installation of the system suits your needs. The site-specific conditions of your property may require additional measures to ensure your system will work properly and for a long time.

The Alberta Private Sewage Systems Standard of Practice 1999 (the Standard) provides the minimum requirements for a new Private Sewage System.

The Alberta Private Sewage Systems Standard of Practice 1999 Handbook provides the text of the standard and additional explanations, information and drawings that will help you make decisions about your Private Sewage System. The Handbook is available from the [Alberta Learning Resources Centre](#) or phone: (780) 427-2767.

Prior to the installation it is a good idea to:

Ensure the prospective installer is a Certified Private Sewage Installer and is familiar with the current Alberta Private Sewage Standard of Practice.

Have the prospective installer:

Estimate the expected volume of sewage per day from your home. The estimates in the Standard are based on a basic home. Volumes from your home may be more depending on the water-using devices in your home and your lifestyle.

Determine the proper size of septic tank, holding tank or packaged sewage treatment plant that will be required to accommodate the expected volume of sewage per day your home will produce.

Determine the best location for the system. A Percolation test or Soil Classification test must be done to determine the soil's treatment and disposal capacity when selecting the site.

Establish that there is not a high seasonal water table that may cause problems with your system.

Confirm that clearance requirements from property lines, wells, water sources, water courses, dwellings and others buildings can be met.

Identify alternative systems that may be suitable for your property.

(To do a proper assessment of your Private Sewage System needs, the Installer must visit your property.)

Identify the required maintenance for your system, the anticipated costs, and consequences of failing to maintain it.

The Installation:

1. Ensure the Installer obtained a Private Sewage Permit prior to starting the installation.

2. It is beneficial for the owner to watch the installation as it progresses so you become familiar with the design and components which will help you in maintaining your system in the years to come.

3. Ensure an inspection is conducted and that you receive a copy of all inspection reports.

4. Ensure the installer provides you with an "Operation and Maintenance Manual" and reviews its content.

[link to: checklist to help decide on a new private sewage system.](#) This checklist will help you select a system that is properly designed for your needs and complies with the Private Sewage Standard of Practice.