

# Monterey County Health Department Environmental Health Bureau

1270 Natividad Road, Salinas, CA 93906 (831) 755-4505



## Wildfire Fire Recovery and Rebuilding Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS)

The following scenarios attempt to summarize what actions will likely need to be taken before the Environmental Health Bureau can approve construction permits.

### **Permitted Dwelling / OWTS Record on file with EHB**

High temperatures from fire and heavy loads from emergency vehicles can damage septic tanks, distribution piping and disposal fields. Fire debris can make its way into the sewer system during property restoration.

**Tank:** Have a **performance evaluation** report prepared by a licensed septic contractor to document structural integrity of the septic tank (and pump chamber if applicable). As necessary, have tank pumped by licensed waste hauler to clear any debris.

An alternative OWTS or pump chamber with damaged electrical components may require an electrical permit from Building Services prior to repair.

**Disposal Field:** Determine the condition of the distribution piping and disposal field by means of a televised inspection via a “snake & locate” by licensed septic contractor to ensure distribution and disposal field piping has not melted or collapsed. A hydraulic load test is recommended (but not required) to ensure the disposal field can accept water.

Any portion of the OWTS that necessitates replacement shall be designed to meet or exceed the tank capacity and/or dispersal system area of the damaged OWTS, and would be subject to the regulations in place at the time the OWTS was installed.

### **Permitted Dwelling / No OWTS Record on file with EHB**

High temperatures from fire and heavy loads from emergency vehicles can damage septic tanks, distribution piping and disposal fields. Fire debris can make its way into the sewer system during property restoration.

In order to utilize an existing OWTS, property owner must provide a site plan to demonstrate the capacity and layout to the extent feasible. No additional OWTS permit fees would apply.

**Tank:** Have a **performance evaluation** report prepared by a licensed septic contractor to document structural integrity of the septic tank (and pump chamber if applicable). As necessary, have tank pumped by licensed waste hauler to clear any debris. ***If the number of bedrooms will increase*** and historical records are unavailable, an undamaged tank may still require pumping in order to demonstrate its capacity.

An alternative OWTS or pump chamber with damaged electrical components may require an electrical permit from Building Services prior to repair.

**Disposal Field (2 Parts):**

**Physical Location** - Determine the condition of the distribution piping and disposal field by means of a televised inspection via a “snake & locate” by licensed septic contractor to ensure distribution and disposal field piping has not melted or collapsed, **and if the number of bedrooms will increase**

**Absorption Area** - Copy of receipt indicating tonnage of drain rock or signed as-built diagram prepared by installing contractor indicating disposal field location and dimensions.

Any portion of the OWTS that necessitates replacement shall be designed to meet or exceed the tank capacity and/or dispersal system area of the damaged OWTS, and would be subject to the regulations in place at the time the OWTS was installed.

**Unpermitted Dwelling / Unpermitted OWTS**

High temperatures from fire and heavy loads from emergency vehicles can damage septic tanks, distribution piping and disposal fields. Fire debris can make its way into the sewer system during property restoration.

In order to retain tank and/or disposal field must demonstrate existing OWTS complies with the Monterey County Local Agency Management Program (LAMP) to obtain permit.

**Tank:** Have septic tank pumped and **performance evaluation** report prepared by a licensed septic contractor to verify capacity, structural integrity and presence of effluent filter.

**Disposal Field (3 Parts):**

**Physical Location** - Have distribution piping and disposal field televised via a “snake & locate” by licensed septic contractor (and witnessed by EHB) to document location and ensure distribution and disposal field piping has not melted or collapsed, **and**

**Absorption Area** - Copy of receipt indicating tonnage of drain rock or signed as-built diagram prepared by installing contractor indicating disposal field dimensions. Two (2) dispersal systems that meet the minimum specifications of the LAMP shall be installed, separated by a diversion valve.

To obtain an after-the-fact permit, the OWTS will need to meet current siting and design requirements specified by the Monterey County Local Agency Management Program for OWTS (LAMP). please complete the OWTS repair permit application in consultation with a licensed septic contractor and submit to EHB. EHB staff will contact you or your contractor to arrange a site visit within 48 hours of receiving the application. Please contact Nicki Fowler of the Environmental Health Bureau for details, (831) 755-4584.

## **OWTS Resources**

### **Performance Evaluation**

A licensed septic contractor may conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the onsite wastewater system, ranging from location to structural integrity to functionality. As much of the information on the form should be completed as possible; however, if a portion of the form does not apply to a specific situation it may be skipped.

#### **Performance Evaluation Guide**

<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=77876>

#### **Performance Evaluation Form**

<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=24944>

### **OWTS (Septic) Permit Application**

<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=24942>

OWTS for new or unpermitted dwellings will subject to the standards of the Monterey County Local Agency Management Program (LAMP, which can be found at [www.mtyhd.org/LAMP](http://www.mtyhd.org/LAMP)). The following items are required to evaluate an OWTS application for a new or unpermitted structure.

- a) OWTS Feasibility Report (see section 5.9 Site Evaluation and Soil Characteristics) at a minimum the report shall include:
  - A minimum of one deep groundwater monitoring boring (LAMP Section 5.9.1, Soil Depth and Characteristics)
  - A site evaluation, soil profile analysis and percolation testing shall be completed for each of the areas proposed to accommodate the required dispersal systems: primary dispersal field area and expansion area(s) (Section 5.9.2, Percolation Testing)
  - The soil application rate shall be determined by Table 5-4.
- b) A Qualified Designer shall prepare an OWTS design for review and approval. The design shall indicate that adequate area exists to accommodate the primary and secondary dispersal systems based on the soil application rate, and a 100% future expansion area when required per LAMP Section 5.4.
- c) Submit a completed OWTS application, signed by the property owner of record.

### **Temporary Residences and Wastewater Disposal Facilities**

In order to limit impacts to health and safety of the environment and local residents, the Environmental Health Bureau must ensure that any temporary residence, as described in the Recovery Guidelines, employs a safe and sanitary method of wastewater disposal.

#### **Onsite Chemical Toilets**

An exception to Monterey County, Section 15.20.020, will be allowed so that chemical toilets may be utilized throughout the timeframe specified by the Board of Supervisors. Prior to bringing a temporary residence on site, the property owner would need to furnish a chemical toilet maintenance and disposal contract to the Environmental Health Bureau.