

## Failing Onsite Wastewater Management Systems

### What is a failed system?

A failed system is one that is not meeting legislative standards. The *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* specifies that your system must meet the following performance standards:

- Prevents the spread of disease micro-organisms.
- Prevents the spread of foul odours.
- Prevents the contamination of water/s.
- Prevents the degradation of soil and vegetation.
- Discourages insects and vermin.
- Prevents persons coming into contact with untreated sewage or effluent.
- Minimises adverse impacts on the amenity of premises on surrounding land.

Examples of a failed system include:

- Systems that have not been de-sludged or there is an excessive sludge layer at the bottom of the tank.
- Effluent run-off from the system or disposal area.
- Excessively muddy or soggy disposal areas.
- Inappropriate disposal of wastewater leaving the septic tank, i.e. above ground irrigation where there is not tertiary treatment system installed (such as chlorination of wastewater).
- Die off of plants and trees in the disposal area indicating nutrient overloading.
- Strong foul odours coming from the system.
- Signs of insects and vermin accessing the system.
- Domestic long drop (pit) and pan toilets.

### What will happen if my system is failing?

Following an inspection, Council will inform you of your inspection results. If your system has failed, you will be sent a letter advising you the reasons it has failed.

Council will provide you with information to help you understand the problem. Rectification works or upgrades will be required to bring your system up to compliance.

Some failures might be easily fixed with the help of a licensed plumber or service agent. However, some

failures may require systems to be upgraded or replaced.

If you don't fix your failing system, Council will issue you an Order requiring you to take action within a specified timeframe. If you do not comply with the Order, you will be subject to further enforcement action such as a fine or Court action.

### How long will I have to fix my failed system?

Depending on the risk the system poses to the environment or public health will determine how urgent the matter is and subsequently how quickly the problem will need to be addressed. Council will work with you to allow you sufficient time to fix your failed system.

If you are required to upgrade or replace your system, generally will be given a period of 6-12 months.

### How do I check if my system is failing?

Call a licensed plumber and/or service agent if:

- The air around your septic smells bad.
- The ground around it is damp and soggy.
- There's lot of dark green grass or weeds growing on or around the absorption area.
- The toilet or drains are slow to clear, or keep backing up.
- The septic tank has not been pumped out (de-sludged) in the past 5-7 years.

Refer to the following factsheets available on Council's website for more information:

- Troubleshooting for Onsite Wastewater Management Systems
- Home Owner Checklist AWTS
- Home Owner Checklist Conventional Septic Systems

### More information

Visit Council's website at [www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au](http://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au). Alternatively, contact Council on (02) 6033 8999 and ask to speak to the Environmental Health Officer (EHO).