

Abandoning a sub-surface sewage treatment system

Guidance and requirements for abandoning a septic system

A sub-surface sewage treatment system (SSTS) can either be abandoned in place or removed from the site. The person or business abandoning the system must complete and sign a record of abandonment and send it to the local government unit with 90 days of abandonment.

Minnesota law requires that a seller disclose a property's abandoned septic system to buyers prior to signing an agreement to sell or transfer. The disclosure must include a map showing the system location.

Abandoning systems in place

For sewage tanks, cesspools, leaching pits, drywells, seepage pits, vault and pit privies, and distribution devices:

- A licensed professional must remove and dispose of all septage (solids and liquids) in accordance with Minn. R. 7080.2450, subp. 6. If the business disposes of the septage at a sewage treatment facility, it must have a written agreement with the accepting facility. If the septage is disposed by land application, ensure federal requirements are met (see the MPCA's [septage management guidelines](#)) along with local requirements, if they exist.
- All mercury-containing and electrical devices must be removed and disposed of according to applicable regulations.
- Abandoned tanks or other underground cavities must be crushed and the remaining cavity filled with soil or rock.

Abandonment activities other than septage removal must conform to Minn. R. 7080.2500, but can be performed by contractors without SSTS licenses.

The drainfield can remain in place. Inspection pipes may be removed, backfilled, and disposed of in a mixed municipal solid waste landfill.

No future discharge can have access to the system; ensure this by removing the piping or filling the end of the supply pipe with grout.

Removing abandoned systems

It's critical to prevent human contact with the contaminated materials, including the distribution media, soil, or sand within three feet of the system bottom, distribution pipes, sewage tanks, and any soils around leaky sewage tanks or that received sewage from a surfacing effluent. Contaminated distribution piping, manifold, geotextile fabric, and other materials must be dried and disposed of in a mixed municipal solid waste landfill; they can't be taken to a demolition landfill.

Contaminated soil may be stockpiled prior to final disposal to allow pathogens to die off. The stockpile must conform to SSTS separation distances, including well and property line setbacks, and a three-foot vertical separation to periodically saturated soil or bedrock. The stockpiled material must be covered with a minimum of six inches of uncontaminated soil and be protected from erosion. Contact the local government to check for additional or stricter ordinance requirements.

If the soil is stockpiled for at least a year, it may be land applied in any place meeting the setback requirements of Minn. R. 4725.4450, covered with at least six inches of uncontaminated soil, and protected from erosion. It may also be used to fill in the abandoned tank cavities.

More information

651-296-6300, 800-657-3864 or <http://www.pca.state.mn.us>.