

## **SEPTIC TANKS**

### **DO YOU NEED AN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY PERMIT?**

Permits for discharge of sewerage have been required for some time under successive legislative provisions. The current regulations introduced in 2005 require “**operators**” of septic tanks who are small sewerage treatment plants to comply with Environment Agency “general binding rules” or if they cannot do so apply for a permit from the Environment Agency.

**Operators** are owners of land which use a system for sewerage disposal or share a system with other property owners or have an agreement with the owner to be responsible for the systems maintenance e.g. a tenancy agreement.

The **general binding rules** cover discharges to surface water and to ground and consist of a list of requirements.

In both cases the sewerage must be domestic and must not cause pollution to surface or ground water. Works and equipment for treating of the effluent must comply with the British standards and relevant guidance in force at the time of installation and must be installed and operated according to the manufacturers’ specification. Someone competent must maintain the system and waste must be safely disposed of by an authorised person. If the system is no longer used it must be safely “decommissioned” to avoid pollution.

On any sale, a new buyer must be informed about the system and how to maintain it.

There are other separate requirements for discharge to surface water and discharge to ground respectively, for instance daily discharge limits are 5 cubic metres for the former and 2 cubic metres for the latter.

For discharge to ground, the discharge must not be within a ground water source protection zone 1 or within 50 metres of a well, spring or bore hole used for water supply.

To find out whether you are within ground water source protection zone 1 you can use an interactive map within the government website.

#### **Applying for a Permit**

If the general binding rules cannot be complied with a permit from the Environment Agency is needed.

Which form of application you need will depend on whether your property is in a ground water source protection zone 1 and in any case how much is discharged per day.

When applying you will also need to provide the Environment Agency with the grid reference for the system, a suitable site plan and the relevant fee.

For more information please see the Government website Gov.uk or contact Alison Fielden.

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