
Onsite Wastewater Disposal Field Decommissioning

Manitoba Conservation's regulation, the *Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation*, MR83/2003, Section 23.1, requires that Manitobans do their part in properly decommissioning septic systems when the use of an onsite wastewater management system (OWMS) is discontinued. An OWMS is typically discontinued due to the connection to a public sewer system or when system replacement is required due to field failure. Proper decommissioning or removal procedures must be followed to ensure that human health and the environment are protected. Septic tanks and holding tanks must be properly decommissioned to prevent future safety hazards due to unsecured tank openings or from tank collapse. Homeowners may also remove other components of the system for practical or esthetic reasons. This information provides guidance for disposal of a septic tank, holding tank or a disposal field from an abandoned individual onsite wastewater management system.

Persons involved in decommissioning an OWMS should wear personal protective gear and employ occupational safety precautions to reduce the health or safety risks.

An out-of-service septic tank or holding tank must be decommissioned in accordance with the regulation and this guideline. An out-of-service disposal field may be left in place. However, if disposal field removal is selected the steps outlined in the disposal field section are recommended.

Decommissioning Procedures

Septic Tanks and Holding Tanks:

Septic tank/holding tank decommissioning **must be completed within 60 days** following connection to a public sewer system, septic tank and disposal field replacement or holding tank replacement. All solids (septage) and liquids must be removed from the tank by a registered sewage hauler and disposed of at a licensed liquid waste disposal facility.

Disconnect the power at the source to all electrical controls and remove all tank accessories (pump, float switches). Remove all electrical lines, (including buried service line) that will not be used for other purposes. Devices containing mercury (float switches) must be disposed of at a Licensed Hazardous Waste Facility.

Crush or remove the extension manway and tank lid. If the tank is a shallow burial, the bottom of the tank should be broken before the tank is collapsed or filled. Breaking the tank bottom prevents the vessel from holding water.

The tank must be filled with clean sand, gravel or other suitable fill, which may include the crushed tank itself. Compact the area to prevent settling. Properly grade the area and establish vegetative cover.

When the homeowner elects to remove the tank, it must be disposed of at a licensed or permitted waste disposal ground.

Disposal fields:

The disposal field may be left in place if there are no plans to use the area for other purposes. If present, inspection ports should be removed and backfilled.

Removal of the disposal field after one year of non-use

If the disposal field is to be removed, allow sufficient time after the system has been taken out of service to ensure the entire disposal field is dry. A period of one year is

considered sufficient time for the field to dry out and for pathogens to die off. Expose the distribution box and have a registered sewage hauler pump all contents from the distribution box and piping.

The piping, distribution box and geotextile cloth from the distribution network should be removed and disposed of at a licensed landfill.

Excavated aggregate, sand and soil can be used as fill on the property without restrictions. Excavated material must be placed a minimum of 30 m (100 feet) from the shoreline or a surface water course. If the use of this material may result in human contact, it is recommended that the material be covered with a minimum of 15 cm (six inches) of clean soil.

Removal of the disposal field within one year of non-use

When a disposal field is to be removed within one year after it has been taken out-of-service, the excavated aggregate, sand and soil must be spread or stockpiled on the property to prevent surface runoff and avoid contact with humans or animals. Excavated material must be spread or stockpiled for a sufficient period of time (approximately one year) to allow for pathogen die off.

Expose the distribution box and have a registered sewage hauler pump all contents from the distribution box and piping.

The piping, distribution box and geotextile cloth along with any other contents from the distribution network should be removed and disposed of at a licensed landfill.

Excavated material must not be spread or stockpiled where:

- the depth of soil is less than one m (3.25 feet) to the bedrock, or high water table;
- the setback is not less than 30 m (100 feet) from a shoreline
- the setback is not less than 30 m (100 feet) from a surface water course; and
- the setback is not less than eight m (26 feet) from the property boundary.

If the excavated material is spread, it must be covered with a minimum of 15 cm (six inches) of clean soil and protected from erosion. Excavated material should not be spread or stockpiled on properties with insufficient acreage, where neighbours may be inconvenienced by odours. After stockpiled material has rested for a sufficient period of time (approximately one year) it may be used as fill on the property without restrictions. If the use of this material may result in human contact it is recommended that the material be covered with a minimum of 15 cm (six inches) of clean soil.

Removal: off-site disposal

The same precautionary steps must be taken when the disposal field material is to be disposed of off-site. Prior to disposal off-site, the plan should be reviewed and approved by the local Environment Officer.

Who can decommission a system?

It is recommended that a certified installer be contracted to perform these procedures as they have the necessary heavy equipment and access to fill material. Decommissioning must follow the procedures set out in **Schedule I** of MR 83/2003 and outlined in this guideline.

Reporting

Within seven days of decommissioning a septic tank or holding tank, persons performing the decommissioning must file a record stating that the system was decommissioned in accordance with **Schedule I** and this guideline. The decommissioning form can be obtained from your local Environment Officer or the Manitoba Conservation website.

For more information

If you have questions regarding decommissioning of your onsite wastewater management system, please contact **Manitoba Conservation at 204-945-2970.**

Toll free 1-800-282-8069 or visit:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/envprograms/wastewater/index.html>