

Notice to Owners of Innovative and Alternative (IA) Wastewater Treatment Systems

The State of Vermont Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division allows the use of Innovative/Alternative (IA) wastewater treatment systems. IA systems are used to: assist in overcoming site limitations that would otherwise not allow for the construction of a wastewater system on the property, to reduce the wastewater strength prior to disposal, or to decrease the size of a wastewater system. As a landowner you should be aware of the required conditions in your Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Permit. The conditions were deemed necessary to ensure that all persons using or affected by the alternative system or product will be protected from health hazards associated with the use of the system or product.

Q. - Am I actually required to keep a maintenance contract?

Yes. Approved systems have specific permit conditions associated with installation and operation that requires landowners to retain a maintenance contract with a professionally trained and approved service provider. A list of approved Service Providers can be found at: <http://drinkingwater.vt.gov/innovativealternative/pdf/serviceprovidercontacts.pdf>

Q. - My System is working fine, why can't I just call a service provider when I notice a problem?

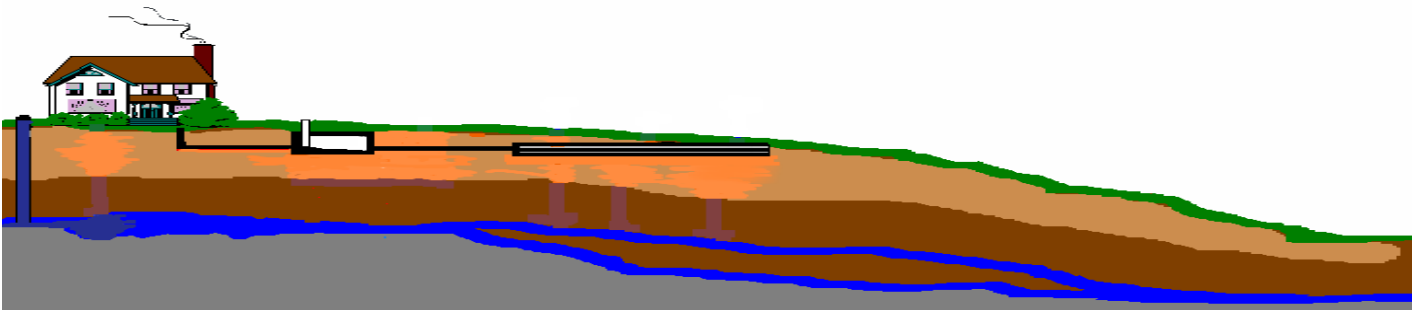
Proactive maintenance and servicing will ensure that the System is working as intended and avoid repairs or replacement at a major cost to the homeowner. IA systems need servicing just as much as your heating system or your vehicle; without these procedures your system may not run its intended lifetime. Routine servicing can detect problems that you might not even be aware of before major repairs are needed.

Q. - What should my service provider be doing if I have a maintenance contract?

Maintenance activities varies by system type and site conditions, but at the very least your service provider should: perform annual or more frequent inspection if required, evaluate the site and surrounding landscape for possible problems, and measure tank solid levels to assess if pumping is needed. Depending on the type of system, the service provider may need to: clean or replace the filters, clean pumps, screens, motors and or floats, and advise you on appropriate use and preventative maintenance of the system (i.e. spread the loads of laundry throughout the week).

Q. - It's my system, my property, and my drinking water. Why does the State of Vermont care if my system fails?

When an onsite wastewater system fails, it's not just the homeowner who is affected. Improperly treated wastewater contains bacteria, viruses and other pollutants. A failed system can result in untreated wastewater: surfacing, leaching into groundwater that we drink, or it can run off into surface waters. This is a health hazard for the general public and is especially dangerous for children and the elderly and anyone with a compromised immune system.



Q. - How can I justify the expense?

IA Systems are more complicated than traditional in-ground systems and may have alarms, filters, pumps, blowers, spray heads, nozzles, floats, tanks, or media. Periodic cleaning, inspection, replacement of components and adjustment keeps the system running properly. Ongoing maintenance may help identify problems that can be fixed before they impact the leachfield. Once damage occurs, repairing or replacing the leachfield or treatment unit can cost thousands to tens of thousands of dollars.

Q. - What happens if I do not comply with my permit conditions?

If a system owner is in violation of their permit, the future sale of a property or a request for a permit amendment may be delayed or negatively impacted. A site-specific permit for the use of an IA product may be revoked if the property owner fails to have a valid maintenance contract or if the unit fails to function properly.

Q. - What requirements should I be aware of?

Depending on the complexity of your system, annual or semi-annual inspections must be performed by your contracted service provider or licensed designer. You should check the conditions of the IA approval letter. Inspection reports must be submitted to the State of Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. Check with your service provider to see if they provide a reporting service.

Q. - What if I am not happy with my Service Provider?

The State of Vermont requires IA service providers to be approved and trained by the Vendor. If the service provider is not meeting the conditions in your contract, not responding to emergency calls or you are unsatisfied for any other reason the vendor should be made aware of your concerns. A list of Vendor contacts can be found at: <http://drinkingwater.vt.gov/wastewaterdisinnovativelist.htm>

If you are unsatisfied with the Vendor's response to your concerns you may contact:

Mary Clark, Environmental Analyst
Department of Environmental Conservation
Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division
[phone] 802-585-4890
[email] mary.clark@state.vt.us

Q. - Where can I find my permit?

If you were the permit applicant, you would have received a copy of the Permit and IA Approval at the time of approval. If you purchased a property with an existing IA System, you should have received a copy of the permit and IA Approval at the time of closing. If you cannot locate your permit, you may use the on-line permit document search tool septic.vt.gov/cfm/wdocs/index.cfm (permit document search) or contact the appropriate Regional Office for assistance at septic.vt.gov (program information). There are some installations that may have been exempt from needing a state permit. There may be records on these systems located in the town clerk's office.

Q. - Who do I contact if I have compliance questions?

Christina Russo, Compliance Officer
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