

Large On-site Sewage Systems Before, During, and After a Flood



Reduced capacity or total failure of a Large On-site Sewage System (LOSS) can result from a flood event. The large amount of floodwater can prevent the system from effectively treating sewage by saturating the soils of the LOSS drainfield. Floodwater can enter the system and force solid materials into the drainfield or create a sewage back-up into the facility.

Before the Flood

- Have an updated Operations and Maintenance manual and emergency plan on hand.
- Keep your LOSS in good condition with routine maintenance.
- Inform all LOSS users of the impending emergency and the need to decrease the use.
- Identify alternate wastewater facilities such as commercial laundry and public restrooms.

During the Flood

- Follow your emergency plan.
- Contact the DOH or emergency contacts.
- Shut off power and discontinue use of the LOSS.
- Do not convey any floodwater into the LOSS.
- Inform all owners of systems connected to the LOSS to stop using the wastewater facilities.
- Do not dig into any tanks or drainfield area while the soil is still wet or flooded.
- Avoid working around the drainfield with heavy machinery while the soil is saturated.

After the Flood

- Inform the DOH if your LOSS was impacted.
- Evaluate the condition of the LOSS and check for any backed-up or surfacing sewage.
- Disinfect any areas exposed to sewage.
- Remove any sediment and debris located on top of your LOSS drainfield in a manner that prevents damage to the underlying soil and drainfield components.
- Do not drive equipment near or over drainfield or dig into drainfield while the soil is wet.
- Repair any damage to your LOSS by a licensed LOSS professional.

After Flood Water Has Receded and the Drainfield Soil Has Dried

- Septic tanks should be checked and pumped out if necessary.
- Ensure any media filters are not clogged with sediment or debris.
- Check electrical connections for damage and ensure they are dry.
- Test and observe the functionality of the LOSS.
- Inform all owners connected to the LOSS that it is safe to use their wastewater facilities.

For more information visit our website at www.doh.wa.gov/loss or contact the LOSS Program at 360-236-3330 or wastewatmgmt@doh.wa.gov.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.