



Wastewater System Guidelines for Homeowners

Maintenance and Maintenance Contracts

Goal: Ensure that the system is maintained for optimal operation and reducing costs over its lifetime.

Why do I need a contract?

1. If your lot/land will require installation of most types of alternative systems, approval of a Discharge Authorization permit is subject to certification that a contract with a service provider is in effect for at least one year.
2. For an existing alternative system using mechanical or electrical components, contracting with a qualified service provider is especially important. Having your system serviced on a regular schedule can help avoid the cost of replacing a system or system components prematurely, the inconvenience of an emergency problem and to prevent health hazards.
3. Conventional septic systems as well as most alternative systems incorporate the use of a septic tank. If your septic tank has an effluent filter, it should be generally serviced every year. If your filter is inside the tank (most typical) the service provider cleaning the filter can advise you as to when your tank will need pumping and alert you to potential problems. If your tank does not have an effluent filter, it's strongly recommended to install one.

There are two levels of services provided in basic service contracts.

1. Regular Service Only. Regular scheduled service that does not include emergency calls or other services like tank pumping. This type of service contract might however include effluent sampling (if required in your County), or monthly maintenance to the chlorinator and addition of chlorine tablets (if you have this equipment). The cost for emergency calls are charged as they occur; sometimes at a discounted rate for labor and parts.
2. Regular Service Plus Limited Emergency Service. Regular scheduled service that also includes specifically stated types of included emergency calls such as equipment failure or line blockage. A down-side to this type of contract is that the service provider has to add enough cost into the contract price to cover situations that may or may not happen. Facility owners that understand and follow instructions from the service provider on what to do and what not to do to their system will be paying for others under contract by the same service provider that abuse their systems.



Provisions that should be addressed in a service contract:

1. Complete contact information from both parties (physical and billing addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and tax parcel number).
2. Frequency of service visits. For a conventional septic system it could be once each year or at most two. For alternative systems with mechanical or electrical components most manufacturers recommend two service visits per year. A service frequency can sometimes be adjusted to once per year if there are few occupants or the occupants live in the home part-time. It is possible that the service frequency may need to be more than twice per year. A qualified service provider should be able to determine the appropriate frequency.
3. Services included in the base price.
4. Maintenance parts included in the base price.
5. Maintenance activities outside the scope of the contract.
6. Terms of payment for the contract as well as for additional services not covered by the contract. The hourly rate for additional services and when the charges start to accrue are other questions that should be clarified.
7. Duration of the contract (one year, two years, etc.).
8. System owner responsibilities regarding the use of the on-site wastewater treatment system.
9. Notification from the service provider of deficiencies or possible up-coming costs such as surface drainage re-routing, tank pump-out, worn equipment, cracked lids, etc.
10. The expected response time to an emergency call.
11. Special conditions such as service appointment requirement, dogs, gate locks or keypad entry code.
12. Other contract wording delineating the responsibilities and conditions to be met by both parties are often added to create a level of legal protection for everyone involved.