



camden council fact sheet

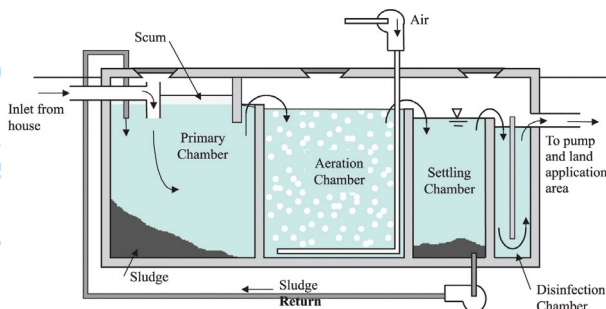
On-site Sewage Management AWTS

What is an AWTS?

An Aerated Wastewater Treatment System (AWTS) is a purpose built system used for the treatment of wastewater.

An AWTS consists of one or two tanks which contain a series of chambers. Wastewater enters the first chamber and solids settle to the bottom to form a sludge layer. The scum layer, containing fats and greases, collects at the top of the chamber and the partially clarified wastewater flows in to the second chamber.

In the second chamber the wastewater is aerated and treated further by biological activity. A third chamber allows additional clarification through the settling of any remaining solids. The treated effluent is finally disinfected before irrigation can take place.



How to maintain your AWTS

The effectiveness of the system is dependant on how it is operated and maintained. The following is a guide to good maintenance procedures that you should follow:

Do

- ✓ Have your AWTS serviced quarterly by a qualified service agent,
- ✓ Ensure that your service agent checks the sludge and scum levels in all tanks,
- ✓ Ensure that your service agent checks the condition of the irrigation system,
- ✓ Ensure that your disinfection chamber is inspected and replenished by your service agent,
- ✓ Have you system de-sludged every 3-5 years,
- ✓ Ensure that you mow and maintain your irrigation area,
- ✓ Keep a record of plumbing, inspections and other maintenance,
- ✓ Learn the location and layout of your AWTS an irrigation area,
- ✓ Use biodegradable liquid detergents that are low in sodium and phosphorus,
- ✓ Conserve water.

Don't

- ✗ Put bleaches, disinfectants, whiteners, nappy soakers and spot cleaners in large quantities into your AWTS,
- ✗ Allow any foreign materials such as nappies, sanitary napkins, condoms and other hygiene products to enter the system,

- ✗ Switch off power to the AWTS, even if you are going on holidays.

Warning Signs

You can look out for warning signs that signal to you that there are troubles with your AWTS:

- Water that drains from house fixtures too slowly,
- Drain pipes that gurgle or make noises,
- Sewage smells,
- Water backing up into your sink,
- Wastewater pooling over land application areas (irrigation area),
- Black coloured effluent in the aeration tank,
- Excess noise from the blower or pumping equipment,
- Poor vegetation growth in the irrigated area.

Owners Responsibility

The owner of an AWTS is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the tank(s) do not leak,
- Promptly fixing the system when problems are detected,
- Ensuring that the system is inspected quarterly by a service technician,
- De-sludging the system when solid levels become high,
- Ensuring that you have an Approval to Operate for the system (these are issued by Council),
- Complying with Council's requests for inspections or maintenance,
- Ensure that effluent warning signs are displayed within the land application area (irrigation area),
- Ensuring that the location of the sprinklers (where approved) within your irrigation area comply with the following buffer distances:
 - 100m from any permanent surface waters,
 - 250m from any domestic groundwater well,
 - 40m from any other waters (intermittent watercourses, drainage, easements, dams etc),
 - 6m if area up-gradient or 3m if area down gradient from driveways and property boundaries,
 - 15m to dwellings, (surface spray)
 - 6m if area up gradient, 3m if area down gradient of dwelling for sub-surface drip irrigation,
 - 3m to pathway,
 - 6m to swimming pools.

Poorly maintained AWTS are a serious source of water pollution and may present health risks, cause odours and attract vermin and insects.

By looking after your system you can do your part in helping to protect the environment and the health of you and your family.

For more information

For further information or advice please contact Camden Council's Environmental Health Branch on 02 4654 7777.