



New rules for operating **septic tanks** and **small sewage treatment plants**

Reduce pollution in your parish by informing local households and businesses using this communications toolkit

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Introduction - Let's work together to protect your local environment

As part of efforts to improve water quality and reduce pollution, new 'general binding rules' have been introduced that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England.

The rules are simple to follow and reduce pollution by ensuring people maintain septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants effectively.

The rules complement a range of activities underway to improve water environments, including the implementation of River Basin Management Plans, which will identify a 10-year action plan to reduce pollution and improve water quality in England's rivers.

The Environment Agency and Defra have developed this communications toolkit to help you inform households and businesses in your parish about the new rules and encourage them to maintain their sewage systems properly.

The general binding rules can be read in full at www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules but here are the main things operators of septic tanks and sewage treatment plants need to do:

- Systems must not cause pollution and should be emptied (desludged) regularly
- Systems must be maintained regularly and faults must be fixed straight away
- People are limited to discharging a maximum of 2,000 litres of treated sewage per day into the ground or 5,000 litres of treated sewage per day into flowing water – if any more is discharged, a permit is required. To calculate how much a system is discharging, go to: www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules
- People must speak to the Environment Agency before installing a new system to check if a permit is required

We have developed the following materials you can use to spread the word:

- Read our **briefing** to get an overview of the general binding rules
- Deliver our **leaflet** to households and businesses
- Publish our **article** in parish newsletters and magazines
- Copy and paste our text and links onto parish **websites**
- Display our **poster** in the community
- Discuss our suggested **agenda item** at a parish council meeting

Copies of these materials are embedded in this toolkit for you to download and print.

For more information, or to order paper copies, contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506.





Briefing

Double click on the image below to download a **formal briefing** about the small sewage discharge general binding rules, which should answer most of your questions. It also directs you to sources of further information. Share this with parish councillors or anyone that you think should know about the new rules:

 Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

 Environment
Agency

PARTNERSHIP BRIEFING September 2015

New rules for septic tanks & small sewage treatment plants

As part of our commitment to improve water quality and reduce pollution, new 'general binding rules' have been introduced that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England.

The rules are simple to follow and will help reduce pollution by ensuring people maintain their septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants correctly.

You can help us protect the local environment by informing people about the rules. This briefing provides an overview and signposts you to further information. It also introduces a leaflet, poster, article and website text you can use to inform your customers and communities.

Overview

New rules for the operation of septic tanks and sewage treatment plants came into effect in January 2015. These rules, known as general binding rules, simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants (also known as package treatment plants) are regulated in England.

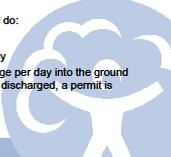
Households and businesses with septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants must comply with the legal requirements, which are designed to prevent and control pollution by ensuring they maintain their systems properly.

Extra protection is in place in rare habitats and sensitive environments, where people may need to apply for a permit if they want to install a new system. These locations are called 'designated sensitive areas'. The Environment Agency has powers to ensure people follow the rules and is helping people comply with them by providing advice and guidance.

How to comply with the new rules

It's easy to comply with the new rules - here are the main things people need to do:

- Systems must not cause pollution and sludge should be emptied regularly
- Systems must be maintained regularly and faults must be fixed straight away
- People are limited to discharging a maximum of 2,000 litres of treated sewage per day into the ground or 5,000 litres of treated sewage per day into flowing water – if any more is discharged, a permit is required. To calculate how much a system is discharging, go to: www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/calculate-discharge

www.gov.uk/environment-agency 

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Leaflet

This **leaflet** contains an overview of the general binding rules and tips for maintaining septic tanks and sewage treatment plants.

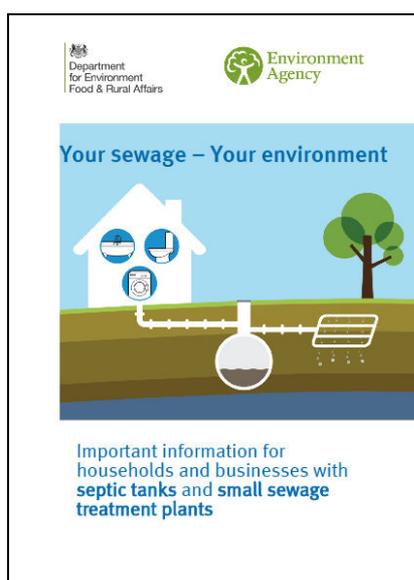
You can deliver the leaflet to properties that are likely to use a septic tank or small sewage treatment plant in the parish. These are usually located in rural areas where there is no access to mains sewerage.

By informing households and businesses about the rules, you will encourage them to protect the local environment by maintaining their systems effectively.

Double click on the image below to download a PDF version of the leaflet.

Print copies in colour on double-sided A4 paper, then fold it down the middle to create an A5 leaflet with 4 pages (**Note:** print a trial version first to make sure it prints properly. If the option is available on printer settings, select 'flip on short edge' to ensure the second page prints the right way up).

The leaflet is also available online at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/water/reform-regulatory-system-small-sewage-discharges/results/your-sewage-your-environment-leaflet-july-2015.pdf> Alternatively, you can order copies of the leaflet by calling the Environment Agency customer contact centre on 03708 506 506.





Poster

This poster alerts people to the existence of the rules and encourages readers to ensure septic tanks and sewage treatment plants are emptied regularly.

You can display it on community noticeboards or in local doctor's surgeries, hardware stores or other places where people will see it, to inform anyone who may not receive a copy of the leaflet.

Double click on the image below to download a PDF version of the **poster**, which can be printed in colour on A4 paper.





Article for newsletters and magazines

We recommend you publish this article in parish newsletters and magazines to inform everyone in the community about the new rules:

New rules for septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants

As part of ongoing efforts to improve water quality and reduce pollution, new rules were introduced in January 2015 that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England.

Households and businesses with septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are responsible for meeting the legal requirements, which are called 'general binding rules', by ensuring their systems are maintained properly and do not cause pollution.

We expect most people will be able to follow the rules and use their septic tank or treatment plant without needing a permit. However, in areas designated as environmentally sensitive, where additional measures are needed to prevent pollution, a permit may be required.

It's easy to comply with the new rules - here are the main things to do:

- Have your system emptied by a registered waste carrier regularly (at least once a year unless the manufacturer says otherwise) and ensure it doesn't cause pollution
- Maintain your system regularly and get any faults or problems fixed immediately
- You are limited to discharging a maximum of 2,000 litres of treated sewage per day into the ground or 5,000 litres of treated sewage per day to flowing water. If you discharge more you will need a permit. Calculate how much your system is discharging at www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules
- Speak to the Environment Agency before installing a new system as you may need a permit. Speak to your local council to check it will meet planning requirements and building regulations. Only install equipment that meets British Standard BS EN 12566
- If you sell your property, inform the buyer in writing that it has a septic tank or small sewage treatment plant
- Read further guidance at: www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules

For further information, including whether you need a permit, call the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506.

If you are concerned that a septic tank or sewage treatment plant is causing pollution, call the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.



Text and links for your website

We recommend you copy and paste the text below on to parish council websites to inform online audiences about the general binding rules. If space is available, use the image as well to make it more eye-catching. The benefit of publishing this online is that the hyperlink will direct people straight to the relevant information on the Gov.uk website:

New rules for septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants

New rules have been introduced that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England, to protect the environment and improve water quality.

If you have a septic tank or small sewage treatment plant you must comply with the 'general binding rules' by ensuring your system is maintained properly and does not cause pollution. Extra protection is in place in areas designated as environmentally sensitive, where people may need to apply for a permit if they install a new system.

The general binding rules are easy to follow. You can read them in at www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules





Agenda item for parish council meetings

Add the following agenda item to the next parish meeting to discuss the general binding rules and consider how the council can deliver and display the materials to reach local people.

During the meeting consider which areas are likely to contain properties not linked to the mains sewerage, so may use septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants. Agree if it would be helpful to distribute the leaflet and other materials to people living in these areas, and consider how this could be achieved.

Here is a suggested agenda item, which can be tailored to be more specific to the local parish:

Agenda Item:

To receive notice;

New 'general binding rules' have been introduced that simplify the way septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants are regulated in England by ensuring they are maintained correctly and do not cause pollution.

The Environment Agency and Defra (The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) have developed materials, including a leaflet, poster and article for parish magazines, which will inform homeowners and businesses about the new rules and encourage people to protect the local environment and water quality.

To consider how the Council can assist with the display and delivery of this information to Parishioners.