

# » ossm roles and responsibilities

## OSSM Factsheet 6

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**The design, installation and operation of On-Site Sewage Management (OSSM) systems are regulated under the Local Government Act 1993.**

## » The role of local government?

**An approval is required for:**

- the installation, construction or alteration of a human waste treatment device or storage facility and connected drains, and
- the ongoing operation of an OSSM system.

Council monitors the operation of all domestic OSSM systems within the local government area to ensure that those systems comply with relevant performance standards.

**Council has powers to issue Orders requiring a person:**

- to comply with an approval
- to take action to maintain premises in a healthy condition
- to store, treat or dispose of waste
- not to use or permit a human waste storage facility to be used, and/or
- to connect premises to a public sewer when the sewer is within 75 metres
- Orders may be given to the owner or occupier of the premises or to the person responsible for the waste or the container in which the waste is stored.

Further information about OSSM systems and accreditation can be sourced from NSW Ministry of Health.

## » Responsibilities of owners or occupiers with OSSM systems

It is the responsibility of the owner or occupier of the premises that has an OSSM system to ensure that:

- OSSM systems are designed, installed and managed so that pollution of groundwater or surface waters does not occur, and
- there is no risk to public health, safety and the environment from the operation of an OSSM system.

Householders must take an active role in the operation of OSSM systems. Householders should have a broad knowledge of OSSM principles and be able to apply that knowledge responsibly.

Householders should have a sound understanding of the operating requirements of the system they are using and should be aware of the need to adjust household activities accordingly (eg by using low phosphorus detergents, minimising use of household chemicals, spreading out your clothes washing and showers throughout the day and week, and conserving water).

Correct operation involves regular supervision and system maintenance. Householders also need to ensure that the necessary service and maintenance contracts are in place.

If a system is defective and cannot be corrected by proper operation and maintenance, householders should report this to Council in order to discuss possible system replacement.

Particular consideration should be given to the educational needs of new owners and tenants when a property with an OSSM system is sold or leased.

**See next page for more information ...**

## »» **Responsibilities of owners upon sale of premises**

Vendors (the owners who sell the property) should make sure that the new householder receives an OSSM operation manual and that additional copies are available upon request.

The manual should cover the following matters:

- system operation and capabilities
- operating requirements - system capacity, the importance of spreading the hydraulic load and actions to be avoided
- troubleshooting and signs of system failure - such as odours and surface ponding of wastewater
- maintenance and servicing requirements
- management of health risks
- occupational health and safety, first aid and chemical handling
- warranty and service life
- emergency telephone numbers.

## »» **Responsibilities of OSSM service providers (where the installation incorporates an aerated wastewater treatment system, AWTS)**

All service providers who carry out inspections and/or work on OSSM systems must have appropriate training. Service providers should ensure that advice and education on system operation and maintenance are provided to customers and householders at every available opportunity.

Service agents should produce a report, in triplicate, of each service call. This report should certify compliance with operating requirements and specify repairs undertaken and test results. The service agent should provide the householder with the original of this report, a copy to Council and a copy for their own records.

If a service provider observes that a system failure has been caused by improper use of the system, the service provider should consult with the owner. If the problem continues, then the matter should be reported to Council for appropriate action. When effluent causes a pollution incident (ie effluent ponding or run-off), the service provider is required to notify Council.

Service agents should be able to carry out temporary repairs and to correct any immediate risks to public health.

Service agents should ensure that any residual materials removed from an OSSM system are handled and dealt with in accordance with environmental and public health standards and Council's requirements.



***If you have any questions or concerns please contact:***

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