

Large On-site Sewage System

Wildfires/Water Outage/Power Outage



Please note: If your sewage treatment system must have power to run a pump(s) and you have a power outage, your pumps won't work, and sewage won't be pumped to your drainfield. If you have a gravity septic system, it should continue to work.

During a wildfire in your area, there's risk of a power outage, even if fire doesn't reach your home. That can affect your water and sewage treatment systems.

If you have a pump and motor in your sewage treatment system:

Make sure you've turned the pump's power off at the electrical panel during a power outage.

When your power is restored, you must, for safety's sake, have your electrical panel inspected before you turn power on to your pump.

Prevent back-ups into your house and overflows from your septic tank.

Minimize indoor water use if:

You have a generator for your well and not for your septic system.

Your water system is supplying water, but you don't have power to your sewage pump.

Your septic tank and pump tank will work as holding tanks. If you've lost water service, and you haul water to flush toilets, there shouldn't be sewage back-ups into your home or sewage overflowing out of your septic tank. How long this will work depends upon how many flushes and how full your tanks were when the emergency began.

PREPARE YOURSELF AND YOUR CUSTOMERS FOR EMERGENCIES

Do you know enough about your sewer and water systems?

What if one works and the other doesn't?

Do you own one, both, or neither? Who's responsible? Do you know how to contact them?

Do they work by gravity or pressure? (Do you need power for one or both to work?)

Will the water valve on your toilet close completely?

Do you know where your drainfield is? (Don't let anyone drive on and damage it!)

Where are your electrical panel, tanks, pumps, and pipes located?

How will you shut the power off safely when an outage happens?

Do you have necessary supplies on hand if you remain in your home?

Temporary Toilets

If you're living in a home that has no power or water and you need power for your septic system, you should be using a temporary toilet.

If you own a large on-site sewage system (LOSS) you may want to share this information with your customers.

Temporary Toilet Options

If you don't need power for your septic system to work, and you have no water coming to your toilet, you can haul and pour water into it and flush after use.

Visit a relative's or neighbor's bathroom if yours is out of order.

Consider staying somewhere else that has working water and sewer.

Modify your own toilet.

Shut the water valve to the toilet off. If you can't close it, try another option.

Flush out any water still in the bowl (the toilet shouldn't refill when the valve is closed).

Line your toilet bowl (under the seat) with a plastic kitchen garbage bag inside of another kitchen bag. Into the inner bag, put some kitty litter, peat moss, lime or something similar that will absorb liquid and may reduce odors.

After using the toilet, close the inner plastic bag with a plastic tie.

You may use the bag several times before you need to replace it.

Full bags must be stored in a secure area, away from pets, wildlife and curious kids.

Wash or sanitize your hands after toilet use and waste handling. Keep a bucket of clean water, a dipper and soap for handwashing nearby.

Use a five-gallon bucket as a toilet. You can add a toilet seat and set it up like option #4. Consider a way to create some privacy where there's space for supplies such as toilet paper and for handwashing.

If you must dig a hole for your waste, make sure it's away from water bodies to minimize pollution. It must be at least six inches deep, so critters or kids won't dig it up. Fill it in after a single use – tamp the dirt down. This is a short-term option only.

For more information contact:

LOSS Program

Phone: 360-326-3330

Email: wastewatermgmt@doh.wa.gov

Website: www.doh.wa/LOSS

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 doh.information@doh.wa.gov