

ACT 537 – SEWAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Treatment Tank Pumping Is Fundamental – Part II

This fact sheet expands the information provided in Treatment Tank Pumping Is Fundamental - Part I on how to develop a successful treatment tank pumping plan as part of a sewage management program (SMP).

How should a municipality best manage treatment tank pumping as part of the SMP?

The management of treatment tank pumping as part of a SMP helps to maintain control and keep pumping proper and orderly. A municipality should consider the following points when establishing treatment tank pumping requirements and policy under their SMP.

- It is recommended to **establish specific standards and/or methods** by which treatment tanks are to be properly pumped. Such standards can be established either directly in ordinance or as policy or resolution that is referenced by ordinance. In this way septage pumpers can better be informed about how pumping should be conducted.
- It can be beneficial to require **registration or licensing of septage pumpers** (as well as other service providers) who wish to operate in the SMPs coverage area. Management programs can, if desired, establish specific qualifications that septage pumpers should meet and can better manage the activity of septage pumpers operating in their coverage areas.
- Most SMPs designate **where septage is to be disposed** by septage pumpers. Many require that septage be disposed at DEP-permitted sites or facilities (which may include sewage treatment facilities, landfill facilities, or land application sites). However, some SMPs have required that septage be disposed at designated treatment facilities either under the control of the management program or municipality or where agreements are in place for the disposal of septage. Most programs also require some form of manifesting of the septage handling at each property. This usually consists of documenting at least the amount of septage pumped and the location of septage disposal. Ensuring the ability for septage disposal is an important step that is often overlooked during management program development.
- Many SMPs limit the requirement for **treatment tank pumping to the drier months of the year**, so property owners are not unduly hampered by wet site conditions or inclement weather in meeting pumping requirements.
- Some SMPs require **permitting of treatment tank pumping** and use the nominal fee associated with these permits to support administration of the management program. However, there are many ways in which to establish management program fees and/or defray the costs of management program administration.
- Many SMPs in Pennsylvania have established procedures to adjust **the frequencies of treatment tank pumping** in light of low sewage flows occurring at individual properties. Such adjustments to extend pumping frequencies should be verified by actual solids and scum level measurements conducted as part of an inspection program.
- It may be a good idea to establish a schedule for inspection or observation of system conditions in conjunction with treatment tank pumping. Many SMPs have observations conducted by septage pumpers, whereas sewage enforcement officers or duly authorized representatives of the sewage management program conduct formal inspections. The results of observations and/or inspections are then reported to the management program.

The results of inspections or observations are evaluated by the management program and/or the local agency, and, where needed, the local agency Sewage Enforcement Officer (SEO) can conduct a follow up investigation. Only the local agency SEO can make determinations concerning onlot system malfunctions. Observations or inspections conducted as a part of pumping provide an excellent way to track the status and condition of onlot systems within the management program and to reveal and correct deficiencies before they become problems or the source of system malfunctions.

- Most SMPs provide for one or more **reminder notifications** to property owners who have not complied with pumping requirements in a timely manner. Such additional notices and other efforts can often bring about voluntary compliance and so preclude the need for legal enforcement actions.
- A favorable outcome is more likely if the district magistrate is educated about the purpose and goals of a SMP prior to any enforcement action.

What aids and resources are available to help municipalities?

The following resources are available for additional information on SMPs:

- “*A Guide to Preparing Act 537 Update Revisions*” (362-0300-003) Access DEP’s eLibrary, Technical Guidance Final Documents
- National Environmental Service Center at www.nesc.wvu.edu.

For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us, keyword: Sewage or click on “Regional Resources.”