

Guidance for Wastewater Collection, Treatment and Disposal System  
Damaged by Flooding – Spring of 2011

Vermont has experienced unusually high flooding this spring due to frequent and excessive snow rain events. As a result, the Wastewater Management Division has received inquiries regarding possible flooding damage to existing on-site wastewater systems. Three concerns commonly being heard are:

1. The septic tank, pump station, or advanced treatment unit moved or the elevation of the tank, station or unit rose due to the flood water. Possible issues include the deliver pipe from the building/structure to the tank or unit is severed or needs re-alignment; the tank or unit shifted; or the delivery pipe from the tank or unit to the wastewater disposal system severed or needs re-alignment. The Division considers such needed repairs to, or replacement of, the deliver pipes, septic tanks, pump stations, or advanced treatment units with the same advanced treatment unit, to be maintenance which is allowed by Rule without needing a permit. The landowner should contact the manufacturer of any advanced treatment unit prior to replacing or repairing.
2. The wastewater disposal system (commonly referred to as the leachfield) was submerged but the system is intact meaning the system can be reactivated and operated without wastewater surfacing on top of the ground, backing up into the building/structure or discharging to surface water once the waters recede. The Division will not view this as a failed system provided the system will operate in the future as previously permitted without any further modifications.
3. The wastewater system was partially or entirely eroded by the floodwater and needs to be re-constructed prior to re-activating. Re-construction includes replacing of stone and/or distribution piping and may involve either a portion of the system or the entire system. These systems are considered failed by definition and will need a qualified licensed designer to design the new wastewater system and assist the landowner to file the application with the Division for a permit. Examples of repairs that **will** need a permit from the Wastewater Management Division include the following:
  - a. the soil that eroded away to expose the wastewater system is not allowed to be replaced in order to restore the lake shore or river banks to their original location or elevation;
  - b. the system needs to be reconstructed to take into consideration the new lake or river location;
  - c. the new system needs to be based on the post-flood soil conditions; or
  - d. the needed construction goes beyond what is deemed "maintenance" by the Rules.

Please contact your Regional Office should you have any questions regarding whether needed repairs to an individual wastewater system require a permit or whether the repairs will be allowed by the Rules without obtaining a permit.

Please note this guidance document covers damage to wastewater systems determined to be caused by the flooding of 2011. All other wastewater system questions shall be answered by your Regional Office.