



**Safety
Codes
Council**

PRIVATE SEWAGE TREATMENT SYSTEMS

Your Private Sewage Treatment System (PSTS) does more than make sewage soak into the ground. Having a properly designed and installed PSTS will reduce the chance of system failures, protecting your family, neighbours, and the environment. It is important to understand the type of system that is best for the conditions of your site.

Planning to install your own system?

Not sure where you to begin? Here are some questions you should ask yourself before you install your PSTS.

What are my legal responsibilities as a homeowner installing my own system?

The owner of any thing, process or activity to which the Safety Codes Act applies shall ensure that it meets the requirements of the Act. This makes you, the owner, responsible to ensure compliance with the Private Sewage Standard of Practice.

How do I evaluate my property to determine what system I need?

Site evaluation requirements are set out in Part 7 of the Alberta Private Sewage Systems Standard of Practice (SOP). The site and soils evaluation will determine what type of system will work on your property. To order a copy of the Alberta Private Sewage Systems Standard of Practice visit www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws_Online.cfm



**SAFETY
TIPS**

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Should I check with my local municipality prior to planning my PSTS?

Some municipalities have established special requirements to address specific environment issues for sensitive areas. Your municipality can advise you of any bylaws that your PSTS installation must follow.

Does it matter what type of soil my PSTS is on?

Soil conditions and site topography are critical in effective sewage treatment. This may limit the options where you can install a PSTS on your property. Plan your PSTS around future projects you may be considering.



Do I need a permit?

You or your contractor must obtain a private sewage permit before installing your PSTS. This is a different permit from the plumbing permit required to install the plumbing system inside your home. To find out where to purchase a permit, contact your municipality or visit www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cp_permit_information.cfm.

The permit process will engage a safety codes officer (SCO) who will work with you to ensure your installation and plans comply with the SOP. This will allow for adjustments in the planning stages and avoid costly corrections after construction. Owners are entitled to copies of the permit and inspection reports. These items are valuable in making payment as per the agreement with your contractor or when you sell your property.

Failure to have a permit before beginning your project can result in substantial penalties under the Safety Codes Act.

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Do I have the proper information to submit with my permit application?

After the property evaluation, the permit applicant must provide the permit issuing authority with detailed information on the design of the system in support of the permit application. A safety codes officer will review the design and issue the PSTS Permit before work can start. The application requires a System Design Support Document that includes the following:

- **Site plan:** A proper site plan showing distances to all features of the development including separation distances to property lines, water sources, water wells, water courses, septic tanks, lift station tanks, packaged sewage treatment plants, final treatment components, buildings, basements, crawl spaces, cellars, and dwellings. Site evaluation: A site evaluation shall be done in accordance to the requirements of Article 7.1.1.2. of the SOP.
- **Soil profile:** The characteristics of each soil profile investigated shall be described using Canadian System of Soil Classification system and include soil profile descriptions as set out in Article 7.1.1.2. 3) of the SOP.
- **Lab reports on soil classification:** A soil sample of the most limiting condition affecting the design shall be collected and analyzed at a laboratory using a recognized grain or particle size analysis method to determine the texture of the soil as set out in Article 7.1.1.2. 3) c) ii) of the SOP.
- **Design Work Sheets:** Work sheets showing calculations for treatment components. Examples of design documents can be viewed at www.alberta.ca/private-sewage-systems-design-tools-and-forms.aspx

If you are still unclear on how to properly install your PSTS, call a certified contractor, your municipality, or Municipal Affairs for advice.

ASK BEFORE YOU START

Hiring a contractor

Designing and installing a PSTS is a complex process, it's recommended homeowners hire a certified contractor to install their PSTS. The system designer and system installer are responsible to ensure that the site has been sufficiently investigated so the most appropriate system is installed. Contractors also test and commission the system to ensure it complies with the Standard of Practice.

A list of certified contractors can be found at:
www.alberta.ca/private-sewage-certified-contractors-list.aspx



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The contractor you hire must hold a current Private Sewage Certification to be able to obtain a PSTS installation permit. When you hire a contractor, make sure your contractor does the following as minimum in investigating your site and preparing your quote:

- Estimate the volume of sewage per day from your household
- Determine the size of your septic tank and the best location for your septic system
- Explore other suitable/alternative PSTS
- Identify any signs of seasonal saturation /high water tables that may affect your system design
- Confirm the separation distances from water sources, water wells, water courses, property lines, dwellings, and buildings.



Maintenance

Observe the installation process of your sewage treatment system so you can learn more about how the system works. Ensure your contractor provides you with a copy of all inspection reports and the Operation and Maintenance Manual. The Operation and Maintenance Manual will include details and information on the system design and equipment and is required by Article 2.1.2.8 of the SOP.

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Importance of permits

The Safety Codes Act requires that permits in Alberta be obtained prior to commencing work on any buildings covered by the Alberta Building and Fire Codes, the Canadian Electrical Code, the Gas Code, the National Plumbing Code, or the Alberta Private Sewage Systems Standard of Practice.

Permits are part of a process to access compliance to a minimum standard of construction safety for the benefit of all Albertans. If construction projects are undertaken without required permits, the owner may be subject to penalties and extra costs incurred to bring a project into compliance.

As the property owner, you are responsible to obtain all necessary permits. A contractor can look after this on your behalf; however, you should specify in writing, who will get the required permits. Some jurisdictions may require a letter of authorization before a contractor can apply for permit(s) on your behalf.

Benefits of getting a permit

When you get a permit, certified safety codes officers (inspectors) will:

- give you expert advice,
- review your plans to find any potential problems,
- inspect your project, and
- make sure your project meets the applicable provincial code.

Making changes at the planning stage can save you money, rather than making costly corrections after construction. Certified safety codes officers will give you an inspection report(s) and follow-up on deficiencies to make sure your project is safe and in compliance.

Where do you get a permit?

Permits are available through municipalities that administer the Safety Codes Act and through agencies that provide inspection services on behalf of municipalities or the province. If you don't know whether your municipality issues permits, contact the Alberta Safety Codes Authority (ASCA) at 1-888-413-0099 or visit safetycodes.ab.ca.

Applying for a private sewage permit

When applying for a building permit, you must submit the following information to your local authority:

- details of the project or occupancy to be covered by the permit.
- details of the land on which the project will be located, including a description that will easily identify and locate the building site.
- plans, specifications and other documents as required by the permit issuer.



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Hire qualified tradespeople

Specific trades such as electricians, plumbers and gasfitters must be certified to work in Alberta. To find out if the tradespeople you are hiring need to be certified in Alberta or to verify an individual's status, you may contact The Apprenticeship and Industry Training office by calling 310-0000.

Call (or click) before you dig!

Alberta One Call will locate utility lines on your property. Call or click before you start any project that involves digging in your yard. Alberta One Call will locate gas, water, electricity, drainage, telephone and cable TV lines. Allow at least two full working days for Alberta One Call to locate your utility lines.

Contact

Community and Technical Support branch of Municipal Affairs:

Hours: 8:15 am to 4:30 pm (open Monday to Friday, closed statutory holidays)

Toll free: 1-866-421-6929

Email: safety.services@gov.ab.ca

Safety Codes Council:

Toll free: 1-888-413-0099 (within Alberta)

Email: sccinfo@safetycodes.ab.ca

Web: safetycodes.ab.ca

Alberta Safety Codes Authority:

Toll free: 1-888-413-0099 (within Alberta)

Email: askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca

