

Damaged on-site wastewater systems following a cyclone or flooding

On-site wastewater systems may be damaged during a cyclone, flooding or excessive rainfall.

This includes:

- septic tanks
- secondary treatment systems
- aerated wastewater treatment systems (AWTS), and their land application systems, for example plastic leach drains, sprinklers and below ground drippers and connection pipes.

Most septic tanks should not be structurally damaged by flooding as they are below ground.

However, flood water may enter your septic tank system through the toilet, other fixtures or the overflow relief gully grate.

Flooding of the septic system may wash out solids from the tank causing blockages or system damage.

Safety issues that need to be checked:

- open covers/pits
- ruptured/leaking systems (including pipes)
- damaged/exposed pipes that may need capping/sealing off.

Failed systems are not easy to identify. However, some simple indicators may include:

- a pungent odour around the tank and land application area
- blocked fixtures, with wastewater overflowing from the relief point
- high sludge levels within the primary tank
- sewage flowing up through the toilet and sinks.

- Some onsite wastewater treatment systems may rely on mechanical and electrical equipment, such as pumps, aerators and filters.

To prevent injury or further damage to your system contact your wastewater service agent.

Do not use any toilets, laundry, kitchen, bathroom or clean-up equipment connected to the onsite wastewater disposal system until:

- all parts of the wastewater treatment and disposal system have been professionally inspected and repaired
- your onsite wastewater disposal system has been approved for use by the local government environmental health officer.

Further information

Refer to the HealthyWA website:

healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Hazards-after-cyclones-and-floods

Other factsheets include:

- Clean-up following a cyclone or flooding
- Damaged asbestos cement material following a cyclone or flooding
- Damaged chemicals, poisons and pesticides following a cyclone or flooding

To discuss further:

- Contact your local government Environmental Health Officer
- Call the Environmental Health Directorate, Department of Health WA on (08) 9222 2000 or email ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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