



Compliance Advisory

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
#2023-07 Issued: 4/4/2023

SEPTIC SYSTEM COVERS COMPLIANCE, INTEGRITY, AND SECURITY (SEASON OPENING)

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS ADVISORY?

Any property owner with a subsurface sewage disposal system (also known as septic systems, or septic tanks) or multiple systems for which the aggregate wastewater design flow is in excess of 2,000 gallons per day (GPD), regulated in accordance with the New Jersey Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NJPDES) rules, N.J.A.C. 7:14A-1 et seq., and the Standards for Individual Subsurface Sewage Disposal Systems, N.J.A.C. 7:9A-1 et seq.

Subsurface sewage disposal system permits are generally issued for campgrounds, schools, and commercial establishments, that are not single-family homes. Local public health departments oversee the location, design, construction, installation, alteration, repair, and operation of single-family home septic systems with design flows of less than 2,000 GPD. The Department recommends that subsurface sewage disposal system owners follow the guidelines in this advisory.

WHY IS THE DEPARTMENT ISSUING THIS ADVISORY?

Failure to secure the covers with bolts, screws or locks, or to maintain the physical integrity of the septic tank covers may result in physical harm or death. The security and integrity of septic tank covers are paramount to ensure the health and safety of individuals in these areas, especially children playing in the areas of these septic tank covers.

Failure to properly maintain or operate septic systems can also result in the increased discharge of pollutants, resulting in negative impacts to the State's surface, ground and drinking water supplies. This can disrupt the integrity of the water through chemical, physical, and biological changes, compromises to public health and safety, potable water supplies, recreational and other water uses, as well as disturbing the scenic and ecological values of the water.

WHAT IS THE DEPARTMENT DOING?

The Department's Water Resource Management Division of Water Enforcement (DWE) has and will continue to provide statewide outreach to property owner(s) with one or more septic systems with an aggregate daily design flow in excess of 2,000 GPD to inform them of the requirements to maintain and secure septic system covers as well as the operation of the septic systems. DWE will continue to respond to incidents of septic non-compliance reported to the NJDEP Hotline and will continue

strategic oversight to confirm that septic system owners have obtained the required permit and the system(s) are being operated in accordance with the permit requirements.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

1. For all systems, and especially campground and schools, ensure that the septic tank covers are secure as detailed above and have integrity to limit access as intended.
2. Ensure that septic systems are operated in accordance with the applicable regulations and are regularly pumped out to ensure compliance.
3. Ensure that all new, existing employees, and septic haulers are trained on septic tank cover security and inspection protocols. **Septic tank covers should be secured immediately after any access.**
4. Amend your NJPDES permit if there is a change in the use of the facility or expanded capacity.
5. Maintain your septic system in good working order:
 - a. Ensure your septic tanks are pumped out and inspected by a properly licensed (A-901 licensed) and registered septic hauler holding a valid solid waste transporter registration licensed septic system hauler at least once, at a **minimum every (five) 5 years**, or more frequently as necessary to prevent system malfunction or an unpermitted discharge to the surface waters of the State.
 - i. Evidence of malfunctioning systems can include ponding or breakout of sewage or effluent onto the ground surface, seepage or back-up of sewage or effluent into the building served, odors or an overabundance or loss of vegetative cover at the surface of the septic systems.
 - b. Maintain written records of each septic tank inspection and pumping event, for a minimum of five (5) years as required by your permits and regulations.
6. If your inspection reveals unsecured covers, covers that lack integrity or are missing, or the inspection reveals operational malfunction, or unpermitted discharge, institute corrective action immediately and remedial measures in accordance with your approved NJPDES permit. Notify the Department.
7. If your system operates year-round, visual inspections shall be conducted, at a minimum, on a monthly frequency beginning the effective date of your permit authorization.
8. If your system is operated seasonally, at least one visual inspection must be conducted any month that the system is in operation. For example, if your system opens on April 15, then it should be inspected in April, and continue each month while the system is open. If your system closes on September 15, then the system should be inspected in September for closure of the season.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

For Reporting Septic Noncompliance or Incidents:	NJDEP Hotline (877) 927-6337 or (877) WARNDP
For permitting questions, please contact:	NJDEP Bureau of Ground Water, Residuals, and Permit Administration (609) 984-4428
Any compliance, inspection, or enforcement questions, please contact the following offices:	Regional Water Compliance and Enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern: (973) 656-4099

	<p>Bergen Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Warren water_north@dep.nj.gov</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Central: (609) 292-3010 Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Union water_central@dep.nj.gov• Southern: (856) 614-3655 Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, Salem water_south@dep.nj.gov
--	---

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The following websites can be accessed for additional information:

For further information regarding the Onsite Wastewater Management requirements of the NJPDES Program: https://nj.gov/dep/dwq/owm_main.htm

Technical Guidance for Inspections of Onsite Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems:
https://www.nj.gov/dep/dwq/pdf/inspection_guidance.pdf

To determine if your facility meets the eligibility or to review the requirements of the T1 General Permit: https://nj.gov/dep/dwq/gp_t1.htm

To view the Department's compliance advisories, visit:
<https://www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/advisories.html>

Please note this advisory is intended to be a summary explanation of the Department's requirements and concerns. It does not include all potentially applicable requirements. If you have any questions related to compliance, please contact the appropriate Regional office listed above.