



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
Land Use Program
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PROPERTY TRANSACTION ADVISORY SEPTIC SYSTEMS/ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS

This Advisory consists of information regarding the purchase of real property located in Alameda County. This Advisory is intended to educate buyers, sellers and real estate brokers about special precautions that should be taken to investigate the Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (sometimes also referred to as “septic systems”) on the property. This Advisory was created in July 2016 and the information in this Advisory may change over time and/or new issues may develop due to actions taken at the federal, state, county, city and/or local level.

If the property has a septic system or an Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS), it is essential that during the buyer’s inspection period, the buyer secures a current, written report prepared by a licensed, competent professional so as to determine the condition of the OWTS as well as the adequacy of the OWTS for the buyer’s specific needs. Visual inspection of the septic tank alone and/or a flow test of the dispersal field may be insufficient.

The OWTS may not be in compliance with current or future code requirements and code compliance may be required for any future work done on the property. Site development and expansion and/or remodeling of dwellings on the property may be restricted due to the existence of OWTS. Securing approvals or permits for changes in the dwelling or site development may require performance evaluations, repairs, modifications, and/or replacement of existing OWTS, installation of new or replacement OWTS, and/or decommissioning of abandoned OWTS, which may be expensive.

Alameda County has an Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Program designed to protect the health of the public and the environment from the improper disposal of wastewater or sewage. The requirements for OWTS are currently contained in the Alameda County’s Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems and Small/Individual Water System Regulations and Ordinance, adopted in 2007. Current information on Alameda County’s OWTS Program guidelines and requirements can be found at <http://www.acgov.org/aceh/landuse/index.htm> or by calling 510-567-6700.

Buyers, sellers and real estate brokers should investigate the applicability of County’s requirements to the past, present and future sale, purchase, ownership and/or development of the property and are urged to investigate these issues with appropriate experts. It is recommended that inspections and performance evaluations of existing OWTS on the property be conducted to determine, on an individual basis, whether an existing OWTS is functional and meets minimum standards of performance established in the County OWTS Regulations. For undeveloped parcels it is recommended that a site evaluation be conducted in connection with property transfers to assess the characteristics of a lot sufficient to determine its suitability for the installation, use, and sustainability of an OWTS. Site evaluations should be conducted by an individual qualified in the design of OWTS including Professional Civil Engineers, Professional Geologists, Registered Environmental Health Specialists or other qualified OWTS design professionals as allowed by their registration or certification. Performance evaluations consisting of an inspection of the OWTS and a flow test of the dispersal field may be conducted by qualified design professionals or a licensed contractor (A, C-36, C-42) or other qualified OWTS service provider trained in the operation and maintenance of OWTS. If there are no records of the OWTS design or installation it is recommended that the performance evaluation be conducted by an OWTS design professional.

The County’s OWTS regulations are currently being revised in response to the new requirements adopted by the State of California in 2013. As part of a property transaction, the buyer, seller and real estate broker are advised to obtain the latest information regarding all applicable OWTS regulations and any other regulations and ordinances, proposed ordinances, and ballot measures affecting or that might affect the property, by contacting the appropriate governmental agencies.

Additional information about OWTS regulations may be obtained by contacting the State Water Resources Control Board, 1001 I Street, Sacramento, California 95814 or at Post Office Box 100, Sacramento, California 95812; (916) 341-5455 and by reviewing the SWRCB’s Web site: <http://1.usa.gov/lk3mtw>. Buyer should also obtain and review “A Homeowner’s Guide to Septic Systems”, published by the US Environmental Protection Agency, and available at: <http://1.usa.gov/eUdvw6>.

OWTS CONSULTANTS & CONTRACTORS

CONSULTANTS (Designers of Septic Systems)		
COMPANY	TELEPHONE	OWNER
Acorn Onsite	(925) 447-5200	Tim Johnston
Biosphere Consulting	(831) 430-9116	Andrew Brownstone
Cal State Engineering	(209) 223-1441	Jeff Morlan & Robin Peters
Campi Engineering	(707) 372-3598	Jim Campi
Eckman Environmental Designs	(510) 390-3992	Noadiah Eckman
Environmental Engineering	(925) 575-5851	Storm Goranson
Environmental Health Consulting	(650) 293-1 045	Christopher Day
Questa Engineering	(510) 236-6114	Norm Hantzsche
SJB Consulting	(209) 223-0201	Steve Buckley
STP Consultants	(530) 680-8687	Mike Elliot
Ted Walker, REHS	(707) 829-7936	Ted Walker

CONTRACTORS (Installers of Septic Systems)			
COMPANY	TELEPHONE	OWNER	LICENSE
A-1 Construction	(510) 728-9231	Bob Piddock	Lic# 944217
A-1 Septic Tank Service	(800) 538-8820	Jack Shane III	Lic# 876403
Acorn Onsite	(925) 447-5200	Tim Johnston	Lic# 499418
Best Septic	(707) 575-5851	Storm Goranson	Lic# 459063
Custom Sewage Disposal	(707) 887-1914	Nick Johnson	Lic# 462989
Dick Bartlett's Excavating	(925) 443-3043	Dick Bartlett	Lic# 425048
Morton Septic, Backhoe & Drilling	(209) 368-9936	Mark Morton	Lic# 846286
Mueller Excavating	(925) 449-5788	Ann & Matt Mueller	Lic # 582970
Pacific Coast Well & Pump	(925) 798-8875	Mike Klassen	Lic# 810579
Trutner Corporation	(925) 862-2479	Ernie Trutner	Lic# 276551

Consultants & Contractors (no endorsement implied)