

## Private Sewage Treatment Systems

### Alberta's Safety System

Alberta Municipal Affairs works in partnership with the Safety Codes Council, municipalities, corporations, agencies, and other organizations, to deliver effective community-focused public safety programs and services to Albertans.

**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.

### 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.

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.



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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 four types of design documents can be viewed at

[www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/CP\\_PSDS\\_DesignToolsAndForms.cfm](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/CP_PSDS_DesignToolsAndForms.cfm)

**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**

### Applying for a building 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 lot.
- plans, specifications and other documents showing, in detail, the proposed occupancy of all parts of the building, state the value of the proposed project.

### 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.

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### 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.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/CP\\_PrivateSewageContractorList.cfm](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/CP_PrivateSewageContractorList.cfm)

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.

*These brochures may be updated periodically. They have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes and regulations currently in effect.*

### More information:

#### Alberta Municipal Affairs

Community & Technical Support  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Commerce Place  
10155 - 102 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4

 Toll-free: 1-866-421-6929  
 [safety.services@gov.ab.ca](mailto:safety.services@gov.ab.ca)  
 [municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca](http://municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca)

#### Safety Codes Council

Suite 1000  
10665 - Jasper Ave NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S9

Toll-free within Alberta:  
 1-888-413-0099  
1-888-424-5134  
 [webmaster@safetycodes.ab.ca](mailto:webmaster@safetycodes.ab.ca)  
 [safetycodes.ab.ca](http://safetycodes.ab.ca)

#### Alberta Safety Codes Authority (ASCA)

Toll-free within Alberta:  
 1-877-413-0099  
 [askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca](mailto:askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca)

### 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.