

# Frequently Asked Questions for Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS)/Septic Systems

- 1. Why do I have to respond to this questionnaire? What gives the City of Los Angeles the right to ask all these questions?** A) The City of Los Angeles entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State's Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). (Go to the following link to see a copy of this MOU.)  
[http://lasewers.org/private\\_sewers\\_septic/septic\\_systems/Final\\_RWQCB\\_LA\\_City\\_MOU\\_051205.pdf](http://lasewers.org/private_sewers_septic/septic_systems/Final_RWQCB_LA_City_MOU_051205.pdf)  
This MOU instructs the City of Los Angeles to conduct a survey by mailing a questionnaire to residents potentially having septic systems on their properties. The purpose of the questionnaire is to comply with the requirements of the MOU and provide the City of Los Angeles information on the numbers of types of septic systems to better tailor our outreach programs and share pertinent information on septic systems/OWTS to residents
- 2. Do you have this questionnaire and septic system brochure in Spanish?** A) Presently we have the questionnaire in English only but have listed the numbers of those who can assist Spanish speaking only residents. Currently, we are developing a Spanish version of the brochure called: "A Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems."
- 3. Does this questionnaire affect my fees?** A) No it has nothing to do with any new fee assessments for properties with a septic system (OWTS). The City, however, may assess a Sewer Service Charge (SSC) to those properties connected to a City of Los Angeles sewer.
- 4. Do I have to connect to the sewer at the point of sale?** A) At this time there are no requirements to connect to the sewer for residential properties with an existing septic system.
- 5. What is the current maintenance and monitoring requirements for the septic systems?** A) There are currently no specific requirements for regular monitoring or inspection of septic systems, but the property owners/residents are responsible for maintaining their systems properly to avoid spills and illegal discharges. For general information on the septic systems, you may refer to the "A Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems at:  
[http://lasewers.org/private\\_sewers\\_septic/septic\\_systems/index.htm](http://lasewers.org/private_sewers_septic/septic_systems/index.htm)
- 6. Am I connected to the sewer? Do you know if I have a septic system in my property?** A) It is the responsibility of the homeowner/resident to make these determinations. However, you may review your water bills to see if you are assessed a Sewer Service Charge (SSC). If you are not assessed a SSC on your water bill, it is likely that you are not connected to the sewer and therefore have a septic system on your property. To further investigate to see if your property is connected to sewer, check the City's NavigateLA website at: <http://boemaps.eng.ci.la.ca.us/index01.cfm> . Additionally, you may seek assistance from professionals you may find in a telephone directory, the Internet, advertisements, referrals, or other sources of information accessible to you. For general information on septic systems, please refer to "A Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems" at:  
[http://lasewers.org/private\\_sewers\\_septic/septic\\_systems/index.htm](http://lasewers.org/private_sewers_septic/septic_systems/index.htm)

**7. Which City Department should I contact for sewer connection, and what type of permit do I need?** A) For sewer connection on Private Property call Los Angeles City Department of Building and Safety at: 213 977-6941, or visit their website at: <http://www.ladbs.org/> or the Information Bulletin at: <http://www.ladbs.org/faq/info%20bulletins/building%20code/IB-P-BC%202002-027%20OWTS.pdf>

For sewer connection on **Public Street** – City of Los Angeles – Department of Public Works – Bureau of Engineering: <http://eng.lacity.org/spermits> .

**CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE**

201 North Figueroa St, 4th Floor.

Constituent Services & Permits – Public Counter..... 213 482-7030

**HARBOR DISTRICT OFFICE**

638 S. Beacon St., Suite 402, San Pedro, 90731

Public Counter/Information ..... 310 732-4677

**VALLEY DISTRICT OFFICE**

6262 Van Nuys Blvd., Rm 351, Van Nuys, 91401.....FAX 818 374-4610

Public Counter, Information, Driveways, A-Permit/Sewer Permits 818 374-5090

**WEST LOS ANGELES DISTRICT OFFICE**

1828 Sawtelle Blvd., 3rd Floor, West L.A. 90025

Public Counter/Driveway & Sewer Permits..... 310 575-8384

General Information ..... 310 575-8384

B Permit Processing..... 310 575-8591

- 8. How much does it cost to connect to the sewer?** A) Each case is different and the cost covers a wide range depending on site conditions, therefore, you need to find a professional to assist you with the cost estimate. The City of Los Angeles does not provide estimates due to liability concerns. Additionally, cost estimates are dependent on specific site conditions and other factors.
- 9. Do I presently pay sewer fees?** A) You may review your water bill to see if you are currently paying Sewer Service Charge (SSC) fees.
- 10. What is the distance of the edge of my property to the closest sewer?** A) You may start by calling the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) in your district. Please refer to question # 7 for the list of phone numbers or visit the BOE's website for sewer permit at <http://eng.lacity.org/spermits> .You may also hire a qualified contractor to assist you with this question.
- 11. What is the distance of the edge of my property to the closest stream?** A) You will need to consult with a licensed geologist or civil engineer to assist you with this question.
- 12. Do you have a list of professionals who can inspect or maintain my septic system?** A) No, the City of Los Angeles does not maintain a list. You may seek assistance from professionals, and get their contact information from telephone directories, internet, advertisements, referrals, or other sources of information accessible to you. We suggest you use licensed and bonded professionals and contractors.
- 13. What type of permit is required?**
- A. Permits for work on your private property are issued by the City's Building and Safety Department at (888) 524-2845.  
<http://www.lacity.org/LADBS/B>.
  - B. Permits for work within public right-of-way are issued by the Bureau of Engineering, Central District A (213) 482-7030  
[http://eng.lacity.org/script/boe\\_permits.htm](http://eng.lacity.org/script/boe_permits.htm)
- 14. How do I hire a reliable contractor?** The following documents are available for download from the California Contractors State License Board:
- I. What you should know Before Hiring a Contractor (Pamphlet)  
[http://eng.lacity.org/script/boe\\_permits.htm](http://eng.lacity.org/script/boe_permits.htm)
  - II. What you should know Before Hiring a Contractor (Booklet)  
<http://www.cslb.ca.gov/forms/wysk.pdf>
  - III. 10 tips to make sure your contractor measures up.  
<http://www.cslb.ca.gov/forms/tentips.jpg>

- 15. Is there a sewer lateral available for my property?** A) Check the City's website, NavigateLA at: <http://navigatela.lacity.org/index.cfm> to see if there is a lateral connection for your property. Additionally, you may seek assistance from professionals, and get their contact information from telephone directories, internet, advertisements, referrals, or other sources of information accessible to you.
- 16. Has the Sewer Facility Charges (SFC) been paid for my property?** A) You may start by calling the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) in your district. Please refer to question # 7 for the list of phone numbers or the BOE's website for sewer permit at: <http://eng.lacity.org/spermits> .
- 17. Whom do I need to call to report spills or odor from a failed septic system?** A) County Health at (626)430-5213 Housing Inspector; or, the Department of Building and Safety at (213)482-6888. You will need to give the address for the location of the spill. The County operator will give you the local number of the inspector that handles spills in the subject area.
- 18. I have irrigation water meters for my property and no septic system (OWTS); why was I mailed a questionnaire?** A) Our database was in part based on the DWP's water bill information. The water bill that does not include Sewer Service Charge was one criterion to identify septic systems. We have tried to exclude all the irrigation water bills from this survey. The questionnaire was mailed out to the addresses on that list. Additionally, your response to the questionnaire will help correct the errors in our database.
- 19. Can I get a copy of "A Home Owner's Guide to Septic Systems"?** A) Yes, please call Bureau of Sanitation, WESD at (323) 342-6239 or (323) 342-6257 so a copy can be mailed to you or download from:  
[http://www.lasewers.org/private\\_sewers\\_septic/septic\\_systems/city\\_of\\_la\\_septic\\_systems.pdf](http://www.lasewers.org/private_sewers_septic/septic_systems/city_of_la_septic_systems.pdf)
- 20. I have a commercial or industrial facility, why did I get this questionnaire?** A) This questionnaire was intended for residential customers living in a single-family residence or a duplex with a septic system (OWTS). . If you are a commercial or industrial facility please call (323) 342-6239 or (323) 342-6257 to have your name removed from the list.
- 21. What provisions do you have for those with disabilities or need assistance in filling out the questionnaire?** A) You may call or have someone call the City of Los Angeles at (323) 342-6239 or (323) 342-6257 to assist you with filing out this questionnaire.
- 22. Is responding to this questionnaire mandatory? Is there a penalty for not responding to this questionnaire?** A) No, but your answers will help us fulfill our requirement to the state Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region and help us understand more about the numbers and types of septic systems in the City of Los Angeles.

**23. Is there any financial assistance for connecting to the sewer?** A) No, not at this time, but we are looking for grant opportunities to assist residents who would like to connect to the sewer.

**24. I have a property with septic system that has been subdivided. Can I use this septic system for the adjacent sub-divided properties and get a waiver for sewer connection?** A) Please contact the Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) at: <http://ladbs.org/> or reach LADBS's call center at (888) 524-2845 to request an inspection by a code enforcement inspector. Also, the LADBS's Information Bulletin on septic systems is at: <http://www.ladbs.org/faq/info%20bulletins/building%20code/IB-P-BC%202002-027%20OWTS.pdf>

**25. What are the sources of information on the web site on properties with septic systems (OWTS)?** A) Please refer to the following web links:

The Bureau of Sanitation septic system information homepage:

- [http://lasewers.org/private\\_sewers\\_septic/septic\\_systems/index.htm](http://lasewers.org/private_sewers_septic/septic_systems/index.htm)

A Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems:

- [http://lasewers.org/private\\_sewers\\_septic/septic\\_systems/city\\_of\\_la\\_septic\\_systems.pdf](http://lasewers.org/private_sewers_septic/septic_systems/city_of_la_septic_systems.pdf)

Information Bulletin from the Department of Building and Safety: NavigateLA website is:

- <http://navigatela.lacity.org/index.cfm>

**26. If a vacant property is under the jurisdiction of the Coastal Commission and is proposed for a building, could the owner get approval from the City of Los Angeles on a septic system before approval from the Coastal Commission? Noting that, the Coastal Commission approval takes a couple of years and the property owner may wish to get some needed City permitting done in advance of that. Does the septic system need a separate approval from the Coastal Commission?** A) The property owner needs to contact the Coastal Commission directly for their requirements for permitting septic systems. Questions regarding approval of septic tanks, in the City of Los Angeles, should be directed to Los Angeles City Dept of Building and Safety. Please call the Department of Building and Safety call center at (888) 524-2845 to request an inspection by a code enforcement inspector. Also, LADBS informational bulletin could be accessed, at: [http://www.lasewers.org/private\\_sewers\\_septic/septic\\_systems/owts.pdf](http://www.lasewers.org/private_sewers_septic/septic_systems/owts.pdf) that sets forth the criteria for permitting of septic tanks in the City of Los Angeles

**27. We have a septic system and are thinking of connecting to a municipal sewer line. What would it cost to connect? Are there any grants or programs that we may qualify for to help us with the costs?** A) You need to find a professional to assist you with the cost estimate. You may get the contact information for professionals from telephone directories, internet, advertisements, referrals, or other sources of information accessible to you. The City of Los Angeles will not be able to quote you with an estimate due to liability concerns. Additionally, any cost estimate is dependent on the specific site and the service provider. There are no grant funds at this time for sewer connection. You may also want to contact your City Council District Office. For general CITYWIDE SERVICES DIAL 3-1-1 or refer to the websites listed under question #24.

**28. There are grey water recycling permits in multi-family residences already approved so is there any way for a single family residence to have a grey water recycling permit for composting toilets?** A) Please, contact Los Angeles Building and Safety Department that may handle approval and use of compost toilets and alternative systems at 213 482-0446 and ask for Amir Tabakh, supervisor of Mechanical Plan check section. (213) 482-0446