

FACTSHEET 7: AERATED WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS (AWTS) - TROUBLESHOOTING

AWTS are mechanical systems made up of many parts which can break down and need to be regularly serviced in order to continue to operate safely and efficiently.

AWTS Maintenance

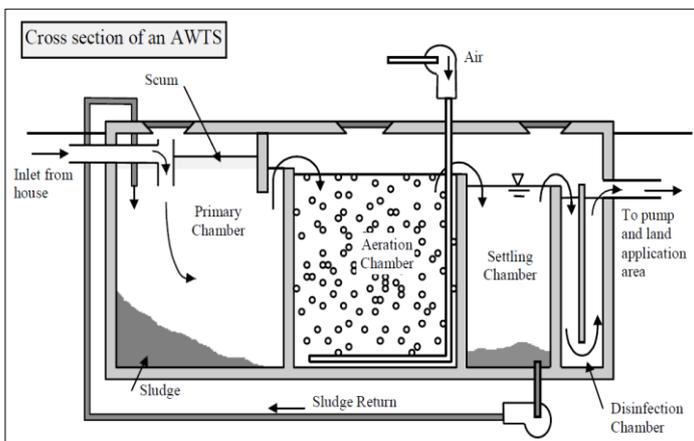
An AWTS must be maintained on a 6-monthly basis by an approved service agent or plumber, and as indicated within the Permit to Install/Permit to Use conditions.

These service reports must be submitted to Moyne Shire Council. These contractors/agents have specialist training and knowledge of the technical aspects of AWTS operation and maintenance.

Never try and carry out maintenance or repairs on your AWTS yourself, and always call your service agent if a problem with the system occurs.

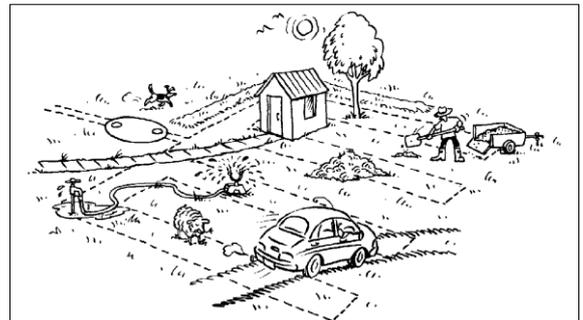
The AWTS should have an electronic alarm fitted to warn you of any malfunctions. You need to ensure that your alarm has been installed and is working correctly, and has continuous power supply.

If your system includes a chlorination treatment stage, there needs to be a constant supply of chlorine tablets.



If you have an AWTS the internal components may look like this.

Typical problems include



Don't treat your system like this!

- Too much sludge in the primary chamber can result in wastewater heavy with solids entering other chambers of the tank, clogging components, and reducing the ability of the tank to treat the wastewater adequately.
- Too much water entering the treatment plant can result in failure to adequately treat the wastewater.
- Toxic chemicals such as bleach and commercial cleaners entering the system can result in good bugs being killed off, halting the digestion and treatment process.
- Common signs of a failing wastewater treatment system include water draining away too slowly, pipes making noises or gurgling when draining, sewage smells, or ponding in the area of the irrigation system.



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Effluent irrigation systems: Do's

- The irrigation system can become damaged or blocked by solids (if filter is not maintained). In these cases, you need a licensed plumbing practitioner to have any required work carried out. Ideally small effluent irrigation systems should use distribution lines buried to a depth of 150mm or more with high quality non-aerosol producing droplet emitters.
- Specialists should be employed to design and install an effluent irrigation system.
- If you move into a house which has an irrigation system, get expert advice on maintenance.
- The plants which are being watered by your irrigation system must be able to tolerate high amounts of water and nutrients.
- Seek advice from a horticulturalist when choosing plants for your irrigation area (and refer to *Factsheet 10*).
- Plant grasses, herbs, and sedges in the irrigation area to absorb effluent. Use water-loving and shallow rooted plants.
- The effluent irrigation area should be clearly signposted to alert visitors that recycled effluent is being discharged. Install diversion drainage around the irrigation area to divert surface runoff. This will help to reduce the load on your irrigation area in wet weather and prevent effluent run-off.
- Ensure that the proper soil tests are done to determine how large the irrigation area should be. A reserve effluent application area should also be identified in case a new irrigation area is needed later.



Effluent irrigation systems: DON'Ts



- Don't drive over or disturb the stormwater diversion contour mounds/drains.
- Don't build structures on the irrigation area or plant trees that will shade it.
- The area should be in full sun to help plant growth, evaporation and pathogen breakdown.
- Small trees should be planted at least 5m away.
- Don't drive cars on the irrigation area or graze animals there.
- Any heavy movement may break the pipework and will compress the soil.
- A small fence will let visitors know which areas to avoid.
- Don't store anything on your irrigation area.
- Don't let children play in the irrigation area.
- Don't grow vegetables for human consumption in or near the irrigation area.
- Even treated effluent still contains potentially harmful bacteria.

For more information contact:
Moyne Shire Council Environmental Health Unit:
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Ph. 03-55680555.

Information Guide adapted from existing EHPA, Dept. of Local Government NSW & Mornington Peninsula Council resources. Moyne Shire Council acknowledges these sources.