

# GUIDELINES FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL OF AN ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM (OWTS) FOR REBUILDING RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES FOLLOWING A FIRE OR OTHER NATURAL DISASTER

The purpose of this document is to establish standardized procedures for the review and approval of construction plans for rebuilding a structure following a fire or other natural disaster. The intent of these procedures is to provide specific criteria for the review and approval process to expedite timely disaster recovery while adhering to the necessary requirements for ensuring protection of public health.

## PROCEDURES

The following three scenarios identify the specific criteria for the “rebuild” of a residential or commercial structure following a fire or other natural disaster:

- **SECTION I: Rebuilding an equivalent structure whereas the originally approved floor plan IS available for review**
- **SECTION II: Rebuilding an equivalent dwelling and the originally approved floor plan IS NOT available for review**
- **SECTION III: Rebuilding a new or modified (expanded) floor plan**

PLEASE NOTE: When rebuilding a New or Modified (Expanded) Floor Plan, the originally approved plans, even when available, are no longer deemed “approved” due to the increase in number of bedrooms, units or plumbing fixtures, as the overall impact on the septic system may have been altered.

## DEFINITIONS:

### Equivalent Floor Plan:

A plan for a “rebuild” which meets the following criteria:

- ◆ A new single family dwelling shall not exceed the number of bedrooms or bedroom equivalents (office, den, library, media room, etc.) of the original structure
- ◆ A new multi- family dwelling shall not exceed the number of units of the original structure
- ◆ All other (including commercial) structures shall not exceed the number of plumbing fixtures found in the original building

### New or Modified (Expanded) Floor Plan:

A plan for a “rebuild” which meets the following criteria:

- ◆ The proposed plan indicates an increased number of bedrooms or bedroom equivalents than that of the original single family dwelling
- ◆ The proposed plan indicates an increased number of units as that of the original multiple family dwelling
- ◆ The proposed plan indicates an increased number of plumbing fixtures than those found in the original structure



# **GUIDELINES FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL OF AN ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM (OWTS) FOR REBUILDING RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES FOLLOWING A FIRE OR OTHER NATURAL DISASTER**

## **SECTION I: REBUILDING A STRUCTURE UTILIZING AN EQUIVALENT FLOOR PLAN WHEN THE ORIGINALLY APPROVED PLANS ARE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW**

The following procedures are to be followed when a structure meets the stated definition for an **Equivalent Floor Plan** AND the original plans (those plans that were previously approved by the department at the time of the original construction) CAN be located, are available for review, and the proposed structure meets the following conditions:

1. The Equivalent Floor Plan is fully accommodated by the existing OWTS. (When it is found that the existing OWTS does not fully accommodate the equivalent floor plan, a full feasibility report will be required. See SECTION IV), **AND**
2. There is no encroachment upon the existing septic system or expansion area. The new structure shall not encroach upon the existing septic system grounds or the future expansion area.

The property owner shall be required to obtain a copy of the originally approved plans. If the plans are not available, see SECTION II.

### **The following documents shall be submitted to the Land Use Program:**

- A copy of the approved OWTS plot plans.
- A copy of the approved floor plans.
- A completed Service Request Application with current applicable fee.
- The proposed floor plan, plot plan and site plan.
- An OWTS inspection report prepared by a licensed contractor who is trained / certified in septic installation. This licensed contractor shall visit the site and inspect all components of the system; to include septic tank, distribution box and dispersal system; to verify installation; and to evaluate the operating / working order of the OWTS to determine adequate sizing and efficient functioning. (This may be completed through the use of scopes, operational testing, etc.)

### **This OWTS inspection report shall address the following items specifically:**

- Inspect the interior condition of the septic tank, including the inlet and outlet tee and baffle walls for any cracks, breaks or other damage.
- Check level of the effluent in the septic tank, including the sludge and scum level.
- Verify condition of the sewage effluent line from the septic tank to the distribution box(s).
- Evaluate condition of dispersal field.

NOTE: Any future improvements to the current property (e.g. swimming pool, concrete patios, accessory structures, etc.) subsequent to the “rebuild” will require identification and percolation testing of the 100% expansion area.

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## SECTION II: REBUILDING AN EQUIVALENT STRUCTURE WHEN THE ORIGINAL PLANS WERE NEVER APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT AND / OR ARE OTHERWISE NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

The following procedures are to be followed when a structure meets the stated definition for an **Equivalent Floor Plan** BUT the plans were never approved by the Department and / or are otherwise not available for review. The proposed new structure shall meet the following conditions:

1. **A Proposed Equivalent Floor Plan** must be fully accommodated by the existing OWTS. (When it is found that the existing OWTS does not fully accommodate the equivalent floor plan, a full feasibility report will be required. See SECTION IV.) **AND**
2. There is no encroachment upon the existing septic system or expansion area. The new structure shall not encroach upon the existing septic system grounds or the future expansion area.

**HOWEVER, WHEN PLANS WERE NEVER APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OR ARE OTHERWISE NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW, THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS SHALL BE SUBMITTED TO THE LAND USE PROGRAM:**

- A completed Service Request Application with current applicable fee
- Provide an OWTS inspection report prepared by a licensed contractor who is trained / certified in septic installation
- This licensed contractor shall visit the site and inspect all components of the system (to include septic tank, distribution box and dispersal system) to verify installation and to evaluate the operating / working order of the OWTS to determine adequate sizing and efficient functioning. (This may be completed through the use of scopes, operational testing, etc.)
- A complete work plan including a floor plan, plot plan and site plan drawn to scale, 1" = 20' for property size one acre or less; and 1" = 40' for properties greater than one acre, indicating the exact location of the existing OWTS including all structures, trees, water main, private well, septic tank, present dispersal system, and future dispersal system. This drawing should not exceed paper size of 11" X 17"

**This OWTS inspection report shall address the following items specifically:**

- Inspect interior condition of the septic tank, including the inlet and outlet tee and baffle walls for any cracks, breaks or other damage
- Check level of the effluent in the septic tank, including the sludge and scum level
- Verify condition of the sewage effluent line from the septic tank to the distribution box(s)
- Evaluate condition of dispersal field
- Specify age of the home and of the OWTS

(NOTE: Any future improvements to the current property (e.g. swimming pool, concrete patios, accessory structures, etc.) following the rebuild will require identification and percolation testing of the 100% expansion area.)

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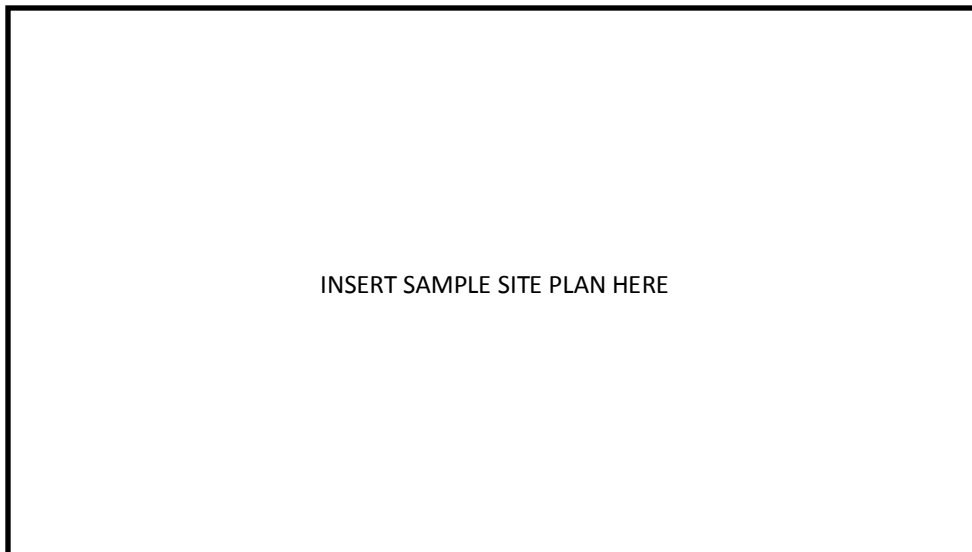
**SECTION III: REBUILDING A STRUCTURE UTILIZING A NEW OR MODIFIED (EXPANDED) FLOOR PLAN FOLLOWING A FIRE OR OTHER NATURAL DISASTER**

The following procedures are to be followed for the “rebuild” of a structure when the proposed plan meets the stated definition for a **New or Modified (Expanded) Floor Plan** and meets the following conditions:

1. The proposed **New or Modified (Expanded) Floor Plan** must be fully accommodated by the existing OWTS. (When it is found that the existing OWTS does not fully accommodate the proposed floor plan, a full feasibility report will be required. See SECTION IV.) **AND**
2. There is no encroachment upon the existing septic system or expansion area. The new dwelling shall not encroach upon the existing septic system grounds or the future expansion area.

**OWTS REQUIREMENTS FOR STRUCTURES THAT MEET THE CONDITIONS OF SECTION III, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WILL BE REQUIRED:**

- Age of the home and of the OWTS.
- The OWTS must be located to determine the size and condition of the system.
- A complete work plan including a floor plan, plot plan, and site plan
- drawn to scale, 1” = 20’ for property size one acre or less; and 1” = 40’ for properties greater than one acre, indicating the exact location of the existing OWTS including all structures, trees, water main, private well, septic tank, present dispersal system, and future dispersal system. This drawing should not exceed paper size of 11” X 17”.
- A completed Service Request Application with current applicable fee.



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**SECTION IV: ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

**SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY REQUIRE AN OWTS FULL FEASIBILITY STUDY:**

The intention of Environmental Health (the Department) is to grant approval to property owners to rebuild following a fire or other natural disaster utilizing an OWTS that may not meet all current code requirements, contingent upon verification by inspection, conducted by a consultant, available records or other documentation that:

- The system is adequately sized to fully accommodate the proposed number of bedrooms, number of units and / or plumbing fixtures
- The system is functioning adequately
- The system was code-compliant at the time it was installed

When this criterion is not met, the property owner shall be required to obtain a full feasibility report and comply with the OWTS requirements set forth in Requirements for Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) available online at: [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh).

**ALL AGENCY APPROVAL:**

Proposed construction plans are contingent upon approval by all local authorities.

NOTE: The information provided above is not intended to reflect all requirements for OWTS approval or responses to the various site conditions associated with existing system operation or installation. Please see *Procedures for Application for Approval of Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Construction* for complete requirements.

Prior to engaging in any demolition activity, the Department recommends that all OWTS components are clearly identified and marked to prevent any damage as a result of heavy equipment.

Please contact the nearest office below for additional questions. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Calabasas District Office 26600 Agoura Road, Suite 110 Calabasas, CA 91302 (818) 880-3410 (818) 880-3411	Lancaster District Office 335-A East Avenue K-6 Lancaster, CA 93535 (661) 471-4842	Baldwin Park Headquarters 5050 Commerce Drive Baldwin Park, CA 91706 (626) 430-5380
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REFERENCE:

Los Angeles County Code, Title 11 - Health and Safety  
Los Angeles County Code, Title 28 – Plumbing  
California Health and Safety Code  
State Drinking Water Standards