

# How to Obtain Approval and Rebuild a Conventional Septic System

January 10, 2025

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



This document provides standardized procedures for the review and approval of construction plans for rebuilding a structure following a fire or other natural disasters. The procedures are in place so that the review and approval process will be carried out quickly, while following public health standards.

## Procedures

Below are 3 scenarios that identify the criteria for the specific criteria for rebuilding a residential or commercial structure after a fire or other natural disaster:

- Section I: Rebuilding an equivalent structure where the original floor plan **is available** for review
- Section II: Rebuilding an equivalent structure where the 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 original approved plans even if available, **cannot be used** due to the increase in number of bed-rooms, units or plumbing fixtures, as the overall impact on the septic system may have been altered.

## Section I: Rebuilding an equivalent structure where the original floor plan is available for review

**Below are procedures that should be followed when a structure meets the definition of an Equivalent Floor 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 **Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (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 is **required** to obtain a copy of the originally approved plans. If the plans are not available, **See SECTION II**.

### Please submit the following document to OWTS:

- A copy of the approved OWTS plot plans.
- A copy of the approved floor plans.
- A completed Service Request Application with current fees.

- 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 by using scopes, operational testing, etc.)

**Please address the specific items that follow in the OWTS inspection report:**

- 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.) after the “rebuild” will require identification and percolation testing of the 100% expansion area.

**Section II: Rebuilding a similar structure when the original plans were not approved and/or the plans are not available for review**

Below are the procedures to follow 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 **Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS)** Construction. 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.

**Please submit the following documents to OWTS:**

- 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 by using 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”**.

**Please address the specific items that follow in the OWTS inspection report:**

- 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.)

**Section III: Rebuilding structure using new or modified (expanded) floor plans following a fire or a natural disaster**

Below are the procedures to follow 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.

**Please submit the following documents to OWTS:**

- 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 fees.

**INSERT SAMPLE SITE PLAN HERE**



## Section IV: Additional Requirements

### There are special situations that may require an OWTS full Feasibility Study:

If the OWTS does not meet all current code requirements, the Environmental Health Division may approve an equivalent rebuild after a fire or other natural disaster, 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 working properly
- The system was code-compliant at the time it was installed

When this criteria 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: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/business/onsite-wastewater-treatment-system.htm>.

### All Agency Approval:

Proposed construction plans must be approved by **all** local authorities.

**Note:** The information provided above does not include all requirements for OWTS approval or responses to the various site conditions associated with existing system operation or installation. For complete requirements, please see **Procedures for Application for Approval of Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Construction**.

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, 8:00 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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