

Septic Systems Assessment Following a Fire

Post Fire

Onsite Wastewater Treatment systems (septic systems) have most of their functional components below ground and are typically resistant to fire damage. Damage to the septic system usually occurs during the cleanup phase following the fire.

The Department of Public Health recommends that you take the following actions when it is safe to return home:

- Inspect your system for damage to PVC piping above or near the ground that may have been impacted by heat.
- Locate the septic tank and inspect for damage. Tanks and lids made of plastic and/or fiberglass may melt when exposed to fire and extreme heat creating a hole or weak spot in the tank or riser.
- Rope off the area to avoid accidental falls into the septic tank and cover any openings with plywood or similar material until repairs can be made.
- Locate the dispersal field, inspect for damage, and rope off the area.
- Keep heavy equipment out of areas where septic system components are located:
 - Driving over a non-traffic rated septic tank may result in collapse of the tank.
 - Driving over the leach field may result in the collapse of the leach lines and scraping away debris with heavy equipment may remove cover material over the leach lines resulting in failure of the system.
 - Driving over the seepage pit may result in collapse of the pit and failure of the system.
- Supplemental Treatment components; pumps, wiring, and filter parts may be damaged by the fire impacting the functioning of the system. Be very careful around any damaged wiring due to the potential for electrical shock. Contact a contractor certified by your system's manufacturer for repairs.

If your septic system has been damaged, or if your system is backing up or malfunctioning, discontinue use and contact a licensed septic system contractor and our office for repairs.

If your house has been destroyed by the fire, please consult our Fire Rebuild Guideline available on our website.

If you have any questions regarding your particular situation, please do not hesitate to contact us at (626) 430-5380.

The Land Use Program

http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/EP/lu/lu_owts.htm

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