



EPA To Issue General Permit for Septic System Discharge

New or Replacement Individual Wastewater Treatment Systems
Illinois August 2012

Comment period, public hearing scheduled

EPA is taking comments from the public on the draft permit. The comment period runs until Nov. 15.

EPA will hold an open house, followed by a formal public hearing, on **Thursday, Nov. 1** at:

**University of Illinois at Springfield
2200 Ernest Hemingway Drive
Springfield, Illinois 62703-5407**

Open House: 3 to 5 p.m.
Conference Room PAC G
Public Hearing: 7 to 9 p.m.,
Brookens Auditorium

How to comment

Send written comments, postmarked on or before the closing date, to:

Mark Ackerman
U.S. EPA (WN-16J)
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Or email comments to:
il_psd_comments@epa.gov

To see the draft general permit and related documents, go to www.epa.gov/region5/water/npdestek/surfacedischarge, or visit the EPA's Chicago regional office to view the administrative record. For an appointment to view the documents, or if you need special accommodations to attend the open house or public hearing, contact Mark Ackerman at 312-353-4145.

For more information call EPA toll-free at 800-621-8431, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., weekdays.

Wastewater from homes or businesses not connected to a municipal sewer system is generally treated by individual wastewater treatment systems. In most cases, that means a septic tank. Nearly one in four households in the United States uses an individual septic system to treat wastewater.

What comes out of the septic system is called discharge and usually goes into the ground around the system, but may also be released onto the ground surface and potentially into nearby bodies of water. There are more than 170,000 surface discharging systems in Illinois, and about 3,000 new systems are installed each year.

The discharge from new and replacement systems must be treated to the acceptable levels established in the new permit. If it is not, the discharge can affect human health or nearby fish and aquatic life. The Clean Water Act and Illinois Environmental Protection Act require permits for septic systems that discharge into federally protected waters and EPA is seeking comments from the public on the new draft permit. (*see box, left*).

Who would be eligible for the EPA's general permit?

Your home or business may be eligible if your new or replacement system processes only domestic sewage at a flow less than 1,500 gallons per day. Also, connection to a sanitary sewer must be more than 200 feet from your property. For a permit at a residence, you must show that alternatives to surface discharging systems are technologically or economically infeasible. For a permit at a business, alternatives must be technologically infeasible.

You would be ineligible for coverage under this permit if any of the following apply:

- Any discharge from new surface discharging septic systems located in lots legally recorded 6-months or more after the effective date of the permit.
- Any discharge mixed with material other than domestic sewage.
- Any discharge from more than one home or other structure.

How would I get a permit?

If you plan to install a discharging septic system that meets the conditions of the general permit, you must submit your notice of intent by certified mail at least 30 days before there is any discharge from the system. Unless your NOI is denied, you may begin discharging from your new or replacement system 30 days after EPA receives your NOI.

You may cancel the permit simply by sending EPA a notice of termination. If you sell your house, or the septic system changes ownership in any other way, the new owner must submit a new NOI to maintain permit coverage.

What would my responsibilities be under the general permit?

Once you have a permit, you would need to operate and maintain your system in the following manner:

- Maintain the system so it meets permit discharge limits.
- Perform operation and maintenance according to the manufacturer's schedule.
- Make necessary adjustments to the system to meet the permit.
- Perform visual inspections twice a year and maintain a log of those inspections.
- Have a qualified professional inspect the system twice a year and perform effluent monitoring.
- Submit monitoring results periodically to the EPA.
- If your discharge goes through a regulated municipal storm sewer system you would need to submit a signed copy of your NOI to the owner. A listing of these systems is provided by the Illinois EPA:
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/water/permits/storm-water/ms4-status-report.pdf>

What records would I need to keep?

- Copies of the records used to establish your eligibility.
- Visual inspection logs.
- Semiannual inspection reports signed by the inspector.

Need more information?

For details on how to apply for a permit, and the technical requirements for the general permit, visit www.epa.gov/region5/water/npdestek/surfacedischarge.