

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

UNDERGROUND INJECTION CONTROL PROGRAM

REGION 8

Marijuana Grow and Production Facility Fact Sheet

EPA Region 8 Underground Injection Control (UIC) program is concerned about the use of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) in marijuana grow and production facilities depending on the type of operation. OWTS are designed to treat domestic wastewater. They are not specifically designed for commercial and industrial waste disposal. Septic Systems may be used however if constituents in the waste stream are below Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for drinking water.

- Soil based growing facilities that generate sanitary waste only (bathrooms and kitchens) are not of concern as long as there are no floor drains or sinks in the growing area that are connected to the septic system. These facilities would not be under EPA Region 8 UIC jurisdiction unless the septic tank is greater than 2000 gallons or can serve more than 20 people. In either of these cases EPA would typically issue a rule authorization for a Class V Large Capacity Septic System (LCSS).
- Facilities with floor drains and sinks connected to the septic system and located in areas where industrial activities occur including growing marijuana, making marijuana infused products and extracting cannabinoids, raise the level of EPA Region 8 UIC concern because of the potential to contaminate underground sources of drinking water (USDWs). Region 8 UIC evaluates these operations to determine if a rule authorization or a permit is appropriate. Rule authorizations may be issued when there is no contamination threat. Permits may be issued when the threat exists because of the use of chemicals, fats, oils, and greases, or any other constituent deemed not suitable for disposal in a septic system.
- Hydroponic growers considering discharging the hydroponic waste stream to an OWTS need authorization to inject from EPA Region 8 UIC. The primary concern here are nutrients associated with the growing operation (nitrate, nitrite and phosphate), nutrient accumulation in the recycled water, pesticides or any other substance used for mitigating deficiencies, and the volume of discharge relative to tank size. For example, a 1,500-gallon septic tank receiving 1000 gallons of fluid per day does not provide enough residence time for the wastewater to be treated effectively, and may hydraulically overload the system causing failure.

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