

Septic Tanks etc. Information Leaflet – Registration and Inspection System

Background

The [Water Services \(Amendment\) Act 2012](#) provides for the introduction of a registration and inspection system for domestic wastewater treatment systems. It has been introduced to address the European Court of Justice ruling against Ireland in October 2009, and even more importantly, to protect ground and surface water quality (particularly drinking water sources) from the risks posed by malfunctioning systems.

Registration

Owners of domestic wastewater treatment systems are required to register their systems in accordance with the Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Registration) Regulations 2012. Registration forms are available from:

- Local authority offices
- Public libraries
- Citizen information centres
- Protect Our Water (Lo-Call 1890 800 800)
- Protect Our Water's [website](#)

Where application is made in writing, households can pay by cheque, bank draft, postal order, or credit or debit card. Registration forms and fees can be sent to:

Protect Our Water
P.O Box 12204
Dublin 7

Where application is made in writing and payment of the registration fee is made in person at a local authority office, households can pay by cheque, bank draft, postal order, credit or debit card, or by cash payment.

Households can also register and pay online by credit or debit card by creating an account at the following link: <https://www.protectourwater.ie/Register.aspx>

A modest registration fee, which is set at €5, applies for the first three months of the registration period, until 28 September 2012. A €50 will apply thereafter and registration must be completed on or before 1 February 2013. The fee is payable to cover the costs of administration by the water services authorities and of the risk-based inspections to be carried out.

Inspections and Performance Standards

The new legislation has been framed to minimise the impact on householders and there will be no inspection charge. Section 70 of the Water Services Act 2007 already places a duty of care on the owner of a premises to ensure that their treatment system does not cause a risk to human health or the environment or create a nuisance through odours. The new legislation augments the existing duty of care provisions. The Water Services Acts 2007 and 2012 (Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems) Regulations 2012 set out the performance standards that treatment systems must comply with. The basic standard to be met by all domestic wastewater treatment systems is that they do not cause a risk to human health or the environment. The regulations also provide for the operation and maintenance of treatment systems and set out de-sludging requirements

Inspections will commence after the end of the registration period in 2013 and will be objective and evidence-based. Householders can be assured that if their systems are working properly and are

being maintained, they need not be concerned. There will be a proportionate and risk-based approach to inspections, which will be targeted towards areas where drinking water sources or habitats are at risk from septic tank discharges.

There is no question of imposing modern standards, for example those set out in the EPA's 2009 Code of Practice, to older systems. Nor is there any question of householders having to acquire additional land to facilitate remediation work. Where an on-site system fails an inspection, the remediation work required will be based on factors such as the nature of the problem, the extent of risk to public health or the environment, existing site size and the hydrological and geological conditions present.

Financial Assistance

All possible options to provide financial support to householders whose systems are deemed, following inspection, to require remediation or upgrading will be kept under review pending the commencement of inspections. The position regarding the extent of problems with domestic wastewater treatment systems and costs of remediation will then be clearer. Any grants scheme introduced will have to have regard to the overall budgetary situation and the financial position of the individual households concerned.

Important Note

Inspections under the new legislation will not commence until 2013 and details will be made available at that time in the national and local media. Householders should take care not to allow uninvited persons, or persons claiming to be septic tank inspectors, to enter onto their property in advance of the launch of inspections. Householders will be formally notified by their local authority if their domestic waste water treatment system is to be inspected and inspectors will be required to carry identification and to present this on request to householders.

Further Information

[Protect Our Water](#)

[Environmental Protection Agency](#)

[Irish Statute Book](#)