

# LAND APPLICATION OF SEPTAGE



## OVERVIEW

After February 19, 1994, all septage haulers operating in the United States will be required to fully comply with all provisions of EPA 503 rules governing disposal of domestic septage.

The rules will be easy to comply with if you keep a few factors in mind:

1. You will be required to keep a complete record of every load of septage; noting the location of where it was pumped, how it was handled and the location where it was disposed. Sample record keeping forms are displayed in Appendix A on page 12.
2. If you dispose of septage at a municipal wastewater treatment plant your record keeping responsibility ends once the load is accepted at the plant.
3. If you land apply septage, additional duties and record keeping requirements are incurred:
  - A. You must meet Pathogen Reduction and Vector Attraction Reduction requirements by selecting one of the three alternatives noted below:
    - i. Injecting septage into the soil  
OR
    - ii. Surface apply and incorporate (plow or disk) within six hours  
OR
    - iii. pH treat - Thoroughly mix 50 pounds of hydrated lime into 1,000 gallons of septage and then surface apply.

Discussion of these options are noted on page 8.

- B. You must calculate the amount of septage you can apply annually to a parcel of ground. This requires knowing what crop will be planted on that land and its corresponding nitrogen requirement. This is discussed on pages 5 and 6. If you need assistance your county agent or sanitarian can help you with this calculation.

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## SECTION 1

### PURPOSE

The information in this domestic septage guidance is provided to help the users and disposers of septage understand and follow a new governing Federal rule called "Standards for the Use or Disposal of Sewage Sludge". These are commonly called 503 rules. Outlined in this bulletin are the requirements for persons who apply domestic septage to non-public contact sites (sites not frequently visited by the public). By carefully following these rules in your land application process you will help to significantly reduce potential contamination of surface and groundwater in your area.

### INTRODUCTION

1. To meet the Federal requirements for application of domestic septage to non-public contact sites, the land applier must first assure that he/she has only domestic septage according to the 503 rules.

**DOMESTIC SEPTAGE AS DESCRIBED IN THE FEDERAL PART 503 REGULATION IS THE LIQUID OR SOLID MATERIAL REMOVED FROM A SEPTIC TANK CESSPOOL, PORTABLE TOILET, TYPE III MARINE SANITATION DEVICE, OR A SIMILAR SYSTEM THAT RECEIVES ONLY HOUSEHOLD, NON-COMMERCIAL, NON-INDUSTRIAL SEWAGE.**

2. Domestic septage may be applied only to sites that are not frequently visited by the public, called non-public contact sites in the Federal rule.

Non-public Contact Sites include  
agriculture land, forests, and reclamation sites

3. The land applier must manage the domestic septage so that pathogens (disease-causing organisms) are reduced.
4. The land applier must manage the domestic septage so that its attractiveness to vectors is reduced. Vectors are insects and rodents that can carry pathogens in or on their bodies and therefore transmit disease.
5. The owner of the land where domestic septage has been applied must adhere to crop harvesting, animal grazing, and site access restrictions.
6. The land applier must certify that pathogen and vector attraction reduction requirements have been met, including crop harvesting, animal grazing, and site access restrictions.
7. The number of gallons of domestic septage applied per acre of land may not be more than needed to supply the nitrogen required by the crop being grown.
8. The person who land applies domestic septage has choices about how to meet the pathogen and vector attraction reduction requirements.

## SECTION 2

### SEPTAGE MANAGEMENT

#### A. GOAL:

Septage must be treated and disposed of in a manner which reduces the potential for contamination and human disease caused by contaminants in the septage.

#### B. WHAT IS DOMESTIC SEPTAGE?

1. It is the liquid and solid material pumped from septic tanks or other devices during cleaning. It does not include commercial or industrial septage or grease from grease traps.

#### C. CHARACTERISTICS

1. Sixty to seventy percent of the solids found in domestic wastewater is retained in the septic tank.
2. There are approximately nine times more nitrogen and phosphorus in septage than in domestic wastewater.
3. Large numbers of disease causing micro organisms - including bacteria, viruses and pathogenic human parasites are present in septage.

#### D. SEPTAGE DISPOSAL OPTIONS

1. Disposal at a municipal wastewater plant is preferred and highly recommended for the following reasons:
  - a. EPA 503 defined requirements for the septage hauler for a specific load end once the septage is properly discharged and accepted by the municipal plant operator. The municipal plant then assumes responsibility for compliance.
  - b. Best option to insure pathogens are destroyed as well as providing significantly better protection of surface and groundwater from excessive loading of nutrients and other contaminants.

- c. Significantly reduces paperwork requirements for the septage hauler.

Recommendations: Septage hauler should contact municipal wastewater plant(s) in his or her service area to determine if they accept domestic septage and to acquire knowledge of the various dumping requirements and fees set forth by that plant.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment recommends that septage not be disposed of at a public or private wastewater treatment lagoon or sludge lagoon.

- 2. Land application is the spraying or spreading of domestic septage on to the land surface or the incorporation or injection of domestic septage into the soil so that the sewage sludge can condition the soil and fertilize the vegetation grown in that soil.

To legally land apply septage the following requirements must be met and documented.

- a. Determine the Annual Application Rate for nitrogen for the planned crop. This amount shall be calculated and the nitrogen amount provided by septage shall not exceed that crop requirement.
- b. Provisions implemented for Pathogen Reduction.
- c. Provisions implemented for Vector Attraction Reduction.
- d. Records for all EPA 503 land application requirements shall be retained by the applier for five years.

## SECTION 3

### LAND APPLICATION - STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO COMPLY

A. DETERMINING THE ALLOWED ANNUAL RATE FOR LAND APPLICATION SEPTAGE.

1. The maximum volume of domestic septage that may be applied to any site depends on the pounds of nitrogen required per acre by the planned crop for a specific projected yield.
  - a. This information is listed for all Kansas grown crops in KSU Bulletin C-509, (SOIL TEST INTERPRETATIONS AND FERTILIZER RECOMMENDATIONS).
  - b. Secure this bulletin from your county extension office. The agent will gladly assist you in using this bulletin. A partial page 5 is illustrated in Figure (1).

Figure 1:		NITROGEN RECOMMENDATIONS			
Crop	Area of State	Medium and Fine Textured Soils		Sandy Soils	Irrigated
		Fallowed	Continuous Cropped		
		Pounds of	Nitrogen Per	Acres	
Corn Wheat	Entire		100-200	100-200	160-220
	Eastern		40-70	40-70	50-80
	Central	20-40	30-60	40-60	50-80
	Western	0-40		25-50	50-80

The maximum volume of septage is calculated by the following formula:

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$$\text{Annual Application Rate (gallons/acre/year)} = \frac{\text{Annual Pounds of Nitrogen Required for the Crop \& Yield}}{0.0026}$$


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As an example, if 60 pounds of nitrogen per acre is required to grow a 60 bushel per acre crop of wheat, then the annual application rate of domestic septage would be 23,077 gallons per acre.

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$$\text{Annual Application Rate} = \frac{60}{0.0026} = 23,077 \text{ gallons/acre/year}$$

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The primary reason for this annual rate calculation is to prevent the application of nitrogen in excess of crop needs and its potential movement through soil to groundwater.

(B) PATHOGEN REDUCTION/CROP AND SITE RESTRICTION REQUIREMENTS

Domestic septage must be managed so that pathogens (disease-causing organisms) are appropriately reduced. The Part 503 Regulation offers two alternatives from which you can pick to meet this requirement. The first alternative (no treatment) and its restrictions are presented in Figure 2; the requirements of the second option (pH 12 for a minimum of 30 minutes i.e. mixing 50 pounds of hydrated lime/1,000 gallons of septage) are listed in Figure 3.

Please note that both of the pathogen reduction alternatives impose crop harvesting restrictions. However, site access controls are only required when the soil incorporation alternative for pathogen reduction has been used. Remember that you are required to inform the owner/operator of the land where the domestic septage has been applied about these crop harvesting and site access restriction requirements. This notification is required because you, the applier of the domestic septage, must certify that these conditions are met.

NOTE: Part 503 regulations do not restrict access to the site by the persons working the land. These regulations assume these persons as well as the applier are aware of and will follow appropriate hygiene practices to minimize any problems with domestic septage.

Figure 2: PATHOGEN REDUCTION ALTERNATIVE 1 for Domestic Septage applied to Non-Public Contact Sites

Domestic septage is pumped from the septic tank or holding tank and land applied without treatment i.e. septage is injected OR spread on soil and incorporated within six hours.

Crop Restrictions:

- i) Food crops with harvested parts that touch the septage/soil mixture and are totally above ground shall not be harvested for 14 months after application of domestic septage. Examples - melons, or strawberries.
- ii) Food crops with harvested parts below the surface of the land shall not be harvested for 38 months after application of domestic septage. Examples - potatoes, onions, and radishes.
- iii) Animal feed, fiber and those food crops that do not touch the soil surface shall not be harvested for 30 days after application of the domestic septage. Example - wheat, corn, peaches, and hay.
- iv) Turf grown on land where domestic septage is applied shall not be harvested for one year after application of the domestic septage when the harvested turf is placed on either land or a lawn with a high potential for public exposure unless otherwise specified by the permitting authority.

Grazing Restriction:

- i) Animals shall not be allowed to graze on the land for 30 days after application of domestic septage.

Site Access Restrictions:

- i) Public access to land with a low potential for public exposure shall be restricted for 30 days after application of domestic septage. Examples of restricted access include remoteness, posting with no trespassing signs, and/or simple fencing.

Figure 3: PATHOGEN REDUCTION ALTERNATIVE 2 for Domestic Septage (with pH treatment) applied to Non-Public Contact Land

The domestic septage pumped from the septic tank or holding tank has had its pH raised to 12 or higher by the addition of alkali such as hydrated lime and, without adding more alkali, the domestic septage remains at a pH of 12 or higher for at least 30 minutes prior to being land applied. To accomplish this goal 50 pounds of hydrated lime shall be mixed and thoroughly agitated in each 1,000 gallons of septage.

Crop Restrictions:

- i) Food crops with harvested parts that touch the septage/soil mixture and are totally above ground shall not be harvested for 14 months after application of domestic septage. Examples - melons or strawberries.
- ii) Food crops with harvested parts below the surface of the land shall not be harvested for 20 months after application of domestic septage when the domestic septage remains on the land surface for four months or longer prior to incorporation into the soil. Examples - potatoes, onions and radishes.
- iii) Food crops with harvested parts below the surface of the land shall not be harvested for 38 months after application of domestic septage when the domestic septage remains on the land surface for less than four months prior to incorporation into the soil. Examples - potatoes, onions, and radishes.
- iv) Animal feed, fiber, and those food crops whose harvested parts do not touch the soil surface shall not be harvested for 30 days after application of the domestic septage. Examples - wheat, corn, peaches, and hay.
- v) Turf grown on land where domestic septage is applied shall not be harvested for one year after application of the domestic septage when the harvested turf is placed on either a lawn or land with high potential for public exposure, unless otherwise specified by the permitting authority.

Grazing Restrictions: None

Site Access Restrictions: None

### C. VECTOR ATTRACTION REDUCTION ALTERNATIVES

To comply with this requirement you must either:

1. Inject septage immediately below the soil surface.

OR

2. Apply septage to the land surface and incorporate into the soil surface plow layer within six hours.

OR

3. Raise the pH of the septage to 12 or above and hold above 12 for 30 minutes.
4. A 50 pound bag of hydrated lime per 1,000 gallons of septage is the suggested procedure.

### D. PROCEDURE - RAISING pH WITH HYDRATED LIME

1. Agitate septic tank contents with truck vacuum hose.
2. Withdraw 200-400 gallons of septage from septic tank.
3. Add 50 pounds of hydrated lime to the septage through the vacuum hose. The dry lime (available at hardware stores and lumber yards) can be emptied into five-gallon buckets or can be vacuumed directly from the original paper bag.
4. The balance of the 1,000 gallons of septage should then be vacuumed into the truck.
5. Agitate septage/lime mixture for 15 minutes by frequent opening and closing of main hose vacuum valve. The air bubbling through the mixture as well as the sloshing of the material inside the truck tank during transport to the field disposal site will accomplish adequate mixing.
6. Thirty minutes after the lime was added, the mixture can then be surface spread on the soil.
7. This example illustrates a 1,000 gallon mix. If you have a 500 gallon truck use 25 pounds of lime. Similarly a 1,500 gallon tank will require 75 pounds of hydrated lime to do the job.
8. Follow all label safety instructions printed on the lime package i.e. wear rubber boots, gloves and eye protection.

### E. CERTIFICATION

1. You must complete and sign for each application site the certification listed in Figure 5, about your meeting pathogen and vector attraction reduction requirements.

## SECTION 4

### EPA 503 RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

You must retain records for five years after any application of domestic septage to a site, but you are not required to report this information under the 503 regulations. However, local authorities may require reporting certain information to them. These required records may be requested for review at any time by the permitting or enforcement authority. The retained records must include the information shown in Figure 4 and a written certification (see Figure 5). Appendix A contains sample forms which can be used to organize your record keeping. You are not required to use these forms, but they may be helpful.

Figure 4: RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

- 1) The location of the site where domestic septage is applied: Provide the legal description and if available the street address, the longitude and latitude of the site (available from the U.S. Geological Survey maps).
- 2) The number of acres to which domestic septage is applied at each site.
- 3) The date and time of each domestic septage application.
- 4) The nitrogen requirement for the crop or vegetation grown on each site during the year. Indicate the expected crop yield to help establish the nitrogen requirement on farm.
- 5) The gallons of septage which are applied to the site during the specified 365-day period.
- 6) The certification shown in Figure 5.
- 7) A description of how the pathogen requirements are met for each batch of domestic septage that is land applied.
- 8) A description of how the vector attraction reduction requirement is met for each batch of domestic septage that is land applied.

Figure 5:

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I certify under penalty of law, that the pathogen requirement shown on form for each site (specify restrictions on harvesting and public access or pH treatment) and the vector attraction reduction requirements shown on form for each site (specify injection, incorporation, or pH treatment) have been met. This determination has been made under by direction and supervision in accordance with the system designed to assure that qualified personnel properly gather and evaluate the information used to determine that the pathogen requirements and vector attraction reduction requirements have been met. I am aware that there are significant penalties for false certification including the possibility of fine and imprisonment.

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRINTED NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE\*: \_\_\_\_\_

\* e.g., owner or employee of Joe's Septic Pumping Service

## SECTION 5

### ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SEPTAGE LAND APPLICATION

1. Consult with county sanitarian about local land application requirements.
2. If county does not have more restrictive limits then the requirements noted below apply.
  - Septage may not be applied within 100 feet of a public or private water supply well.
  - Septage shall not be applied within a 100 year flood plain.
  - Septage shall not be applied within 33 feet of any surface water.

## GLOSSARY

1. pH - a numerical measure of the acidity or alkalinity of a liquid (example - septage) or a solid substance such as soil.

2 <----- 7 -----> 14  
(very acid)    neutral    (very alkaline)

2. Pathogen Reduction - one important goal of EPA 503 rules is to reduce the number of disease causing organisms commonly found in septage when that septage is land applied.
3. Vector Attraction Reduction - EPA 503 requires the land applier to manage domestic septage so that its attractiveness to vectors is reduced. Vectors are insects and rodents that carry pathogens in or on their bodies and therefore transmit disease.
4. Annual Application Rate - The maximum volume of domestic septage that may be applied to any site during a 365 day period. This is determined by the amount of nitrogen required by the planned crop and the yield.

## APPENDIX A

There are two forms that may be helpful to you for keeping your records. The first of these forms (Form 1) is for recording information that pertains to the different fields onto which you apply domestic septage. The second form (Form 2) is an example of a daily log that might be kept in the truck as domestic septage is pumped.

Samples of both of these forms have been filled in as an example of the type of information you might actually record.





LAND APPLICATION SITE:  
RECORD YEAR:

NAME & ADDRESS WHERE SEPTAGE WAS PUMPED	DATE OF APPLIC. TO SITE	GALLONS APPLIED TO SITE	TOTAL GALS APPLIED Y.T.D.	WAS SEPTAGE INCORP.? hours*	WAS SEPTAGE INJECTED?	IF SEPTAGE WAS PH TREATED, INDICATE** type amount how mixed	PH 12 held for 30 min. yes no
L.				yes no hours*	yes no		yes no
				yes no hours*	yes no		yes no
				yes no hours*	yes no		yes no
				yes no hours*	yes no		yes no
				yes no hours*	yes no		yes no
				yes no hours*	yes no		yes no

\* If septage was incorporated, how many hours after it was applied to the site?

\*\* Type means what kind of alkaline material was used, e.g. lime.

Amount means how many pound were added.

How mixed means how did you mix the alkaline material into the septage.

# EXAMPLE FORM COMPLETION

LAND APPLICATION SITE: Jones Farms, SE/4, Section 6, Township 7N, Range 3 West - Rural Route 3, Hays, KS 67601  
RECORD YEAR: 1994

NAME & ADDRESS WHERE SEPTAGE WAS PUMPED	DATE OF APPLIC. TO SITE	GALLONS APPLIED TO SITE	TOTAL GALS APPLIED Y.T.D.	WAS SEPTAGE INCORP.? hours*	WAS SEPTAGE INJECTED? Yes No	IF SEPTAGE WAS pH TREATED, INDICATE** type amount how mixed	PH 12 held for 30 min Yes no
Willis Brown 231 Wilson Hays, KS	3/25/94	1,000	5,000	No hours*	Yes No	Hydrated Lime 50 lbs. Agitated with vacuum valve	Yes no
				Yes no hours*	Yes no		Yes no
				Yes no hours*	Yes no		Yes no
				Yes no hours*	Yes no		Yes no
				Yes no hours*	Yes no		Yes no
				Yes no hours*	Yes no		Yes no

\* If septage was incorporated, how many hours after it was applied to the site?

\*\* Type means what kind of alkaline material was used, e.g. lime.

Amount means how many pound were added.

How mixed means how did you mix the alkaline material into the septage.

