

## Warning signs

You can look out for a few warning signs that signal to you that there are troubles with your AWTS. Ensure that these problems are attended to immediately to protect your health and the environment.

Look out for the following warning signs:

- 🔔 Water that drains too slowly.
- 🔔 Drain pipes that gurgle or make noises when air bubbles are forced back through the system.
- 🔔 Sewage smells, this indicates a serious problem.
- 🔔 Water backing up into your sink which may indicate that your system is already failing.
- 🔔 Wastewater pooling over the land application areas.
- 🔔 Excess noise from the blower or pumping equipment
- 🔔 Poor vegetation growth in irrigated area.

Odour problems from a vent on the AWTS can be a result of slow or inadequate breakdown of solids. Call a technician to service the system.

## Help Protect your Health and the Environment

By looking after your treatment system you can do your part in helping to protect the environment and the health of you and your family.



# Your Aerated Wastewater Treatment System

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## **What is an AWTS (Aerated Wastewater Treatment Systems)?**

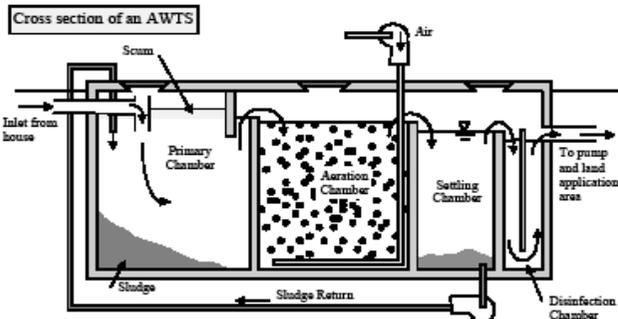
An AWTS is a purpose built system used for the treatment of sewage and liquid wastes from a single household or multiple dwellings.

It consists of a series of treatment chambers combined with an irrigation system. An AWTS enables people living in unsewered areas to treat and utilise their wastewater.

### **How does an AWTS work?**

Wastewater from a household is treated in stages in several separate chambers. The first chamber is similar to a conventional septic tank. The wastewater enters the chamber where the solids settle to the bottom and are retained in the tank forming a sludge layer. Scum collects at the top, and the partially clarified wastewater flows into a second chamber. Here the wastewater is mixed with air to assist bacteria to further treat it. A third chamber allows additional clarification through the settling of solids, which are returned for further treatment to either the septic chamber (as shown) or to the aeration chamber. The clarified effluent is disinfected in another chamber (usually by chlorination) before irrigation can take place.

Bacteria in the first chamber break down the solid matter in the sludge and scum layers.



Material that cannot be fully broken down gradually builds up in the chamber and must be pumped out periodically.

### **Regulations and recommendations**

AWTSs should be fitted with an alarm having visual and audible components to indicate mechanical and electrical equipment malfunctions. The alarm should provide a signal adjacent to the alarm and at a relevant position inside the house. The alarm should incorporate a warning lamp which may only be reset by the service agent.

### **Maintaining your AWTS**

#### **DO**

- ☞ Have your AWTS inspected and serviced four times per year by an approved contractor. Assessment should be applicable to the system design.
- ☞ Have your system service include assessment of sludge and scum levels in all tanks, and performance of irrigation areas.
- ☞ Have all your tanks desludged at least every three to five years.
- ☞ Have your disinfection chamber inspected and tested quarterly to ensure correct disinfectant levels.
- ☞ Have your grease trap (if installed) cleaned out at least every two months.
- ☞ Keep a record of pumping, inspections and other maintenance.
- ☞ Learn the location and layout of your AWTS and land application area
- ☞ Use biodegradable liquid detergents such as concentrates with low sodium and phosphorous levels.
- ☞ Conserve water.

#### **DON'T**

- ☞ Don't put bleaches, disinfectants, whiteners, nappy soakers and spot removers in large quantities into your AWTS via the sink, washing machine or toilet.
- ☞ Don't allow any foreign materials such as nappies, sanitary napkins, condoms and other hygiene products enter the system.
- ☞ Don't use more than the recommended amounts of detergents.
- ☞ Don't put fats and oils down the drain and keep food waste out of your system.
- ☞ Don't switch off power to the AWTS, even if you are going on holidays.

### **Reducing water usage**

Reducing water usage will lessen the likelihood of problems such as overloading with your AWTS. Overloading may result in wastewater backing up into your house, contamination of your yard with improperly treated effluent, and effluent from your system entering a nearby river, creek or dam.

Conservative water use around the house will reduce the amount of wastewater which is produced and needs to be treated.

Your AWTS is also unable to cope with large volumes of water such as several showers or loads of washing over a short period of time. You should try to avoid these 'shock loads' by ensuring water use is spread more evenly throughout the day and week.