

**SANITATION PROVIDES UPDATE ON PROPOSED ORDINANCE GOVERNING OWTS (ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS, OR SEPTIC SYSTEMS)**

**LOS ANGELES (March 10, 2011)**—The City of Los Angeles Department of Sanitation is proposing an ordinance to govern onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS), commonly known as septic systems. Sanitation has conducted extensive public outreach over the past year—presenting at more than 35 community meetings Citywide and sending information to all OWTS owners. Listening to stakeholder comments from the first round of outreach meetings, Sanitation incorporated them as feasible into the proposed ordinance. All are invited to attend one of the next set of outreach meetings:

**March 10, 6-8 pm - Donald C. Tillman Water Reclamation Plant; 6100 Woodley Ave., Van Nuys**  
**March 15, 6-8 pm - Cypress Park Community Center; 929 Cypress Ave., Los Angeles**  
**March 17, 6-8 pm - Council District 11 Field Office Rm 200; 1645 Corinth Ave., West Los Angeles**  
**March 22, 6-8 pm - Tarzana Recreational Center; 5655 Vanalden Ave., Tarzana**  
**March 24, 6-8 pm - Council District 2 Field Office; 7747 Foothill Blvd., Tujunga**  
**March 29, 1-3 pm - L.A. Bureau of Sanitation; 2714 Media Center Dr., Los Angeles**

Proper maintenance and regular pumping are vital to avoiding septic system backups and expensive repairs. A failing system is not only unpleasant due to overflow to the ground surface or the plumbing in the home backing-up, but it is a human health risk and a hazard to the environment.

Sanitation's mission is to protect public health and the environment, and one of its essential responsibilities is compliance with state and federal mandates. The City of Los Angeles entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region in 2005. As part of that agreement, the City is required to have an ordinance addressing OWTS in place by June 30, 2011.

Without the MOU, the Regional Board can apply general Waste Discharge Requirements for each residence with OWTS. The WDRs would require each homeowner to file a "Report of Waste Discharge" (ROW), essentially proving that their septic systems work properly, protect the public's health and do not pollute any waters of the State. By easing administrative issues and lightening the burden on homeowners, the City intends to act as a buffer between the State and residential OWTS.

At the most basic level, the proposed OWTS ordinance will help Sanitation take inventory. Sanitation estimates that there are approximately 11,643 residential (one- or two-dwelling units) OWTS in the City. This will provide confirmation and at the same time ask owners to indicate that they are caring for their systems properly. This will involve self-certification, and the registration would be good for three years. No fees will be required, and this will apply to the vast majority (10,970) of OWTS in Los Angeles.

Of that 11,643 OWTS, there are approximately 673 are considered high-risk. Of the 673 high-risk OWTS, 320 are either within 900 feet of active water wells or within 600 feet of impaired water bodies as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) and the State Water Resources

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Control Board's most recent 303(d) list of the Clean Water Act. The Mandeville Canyon Creek that is tributary to the Santa Monica Beach is identified as impaired for nutrients and/or bacteria under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. Approximately 346 OWTS in close proximity to Mandeville Canyon Creek are also considered high-risk. The proposed ordinance would require OWTS owners in high-risk areas to obtain operating permits every three years, and would require a certified inspection upon permit renewal. The cost for the OWTS permit in high-risk areas will be \$350, paid once every three years.

Also in the Mandeville Canyon area, the City has about seven high-risk OWTS with supplemental systems, and the proposed ordinance would require that those owners submit quarterly monitoring reports, possess an operating agreement with a certified service provider and obtain an annual operating permit for \$800.

Certified service providers are defined in the draft framework of the proposed ordinance that can be found at [www.lasewers.org](http://www.lasewers.org). Information about fee variances, non-compliance and appeals is also available. The proposed ordinance will not require OWTS owners to connect to the sewer or to upgrade to advanced treatment OWTS. However, the City's Municipal Code already mandates that property owners connect to the sewer system if their septic system fails and/or requires replacement [LAMC 94.101.15.2] and a sewer is available within 200 feet of the structure [LAMC 94.713.4]. The proposed ordinance requires approval from the Board of Public Works, City Council and Mayor, and if adopted, would become effective July 1, 2012.

Residents should be aware that Assembly Bill 885 (passed in September 2000) directs the State Water Resources Control Board to develop standards for the permitting and operation of onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems. These statewide standards were supposed to become effective in 2004, but they have been undergoing a long stakeholder review and revision process. As part of previous drafts of Assembly Bill 885 regulations, mandates to connect to sewers in high-risk areas were considered. Nothing has been decided at this time, but updates can be viewed at the California Water Resources Control Board website [www.swrcb.ca.gov](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov) (Septic-Programs-New Draft OWTS Regulations).

Sanitation protects public health and the environment through the administration and management of three program areas: Clean Water (Wastewater), Solid Resources (Solid Waste Management) and Watershed Protection (Stormwater). These infrastructure programs collect, treat, dispose and recycle the solid and liquid waste generated by the nation's second largest city of more than four million residents in a 468 square mile area. Through these essential programs, Sanitation delivers a triple bottom line of economic, environmental and social benefits that sustain the quality of life in the City of Los Angeles.

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