

# EGLE Onsite Wastewater Program: Soil Dispersal System and Septic Tank Abandonment

---

The following correspondence has been pieced together from Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) historical interdepartmental communication regarding the proper abandonment and removal of an onsite wastewater system.

Over time with the replacement of existing onsite wastewater systems, the proper abandonment or removal of septic tanks and the soil dispersal areas must be addressed. In order to ensure the protection of public health and safety it is increasingly important to make sure the abandonment or removal process is done in a manner to reduce pathogen exposure. The following recommendations are ways to reduce public health risks and should be followed as supported through the applicable laws and regulations. Although it is best to leave the onsite wastewater system in place (after proper abandonment) this can only be acceptable if the Local Health Department regulations allow for it. The following recommendations are ways to reduce public health risks and should be followed as supported through the applicable laws and regulations.

For septic tanks:

1. A licensed septage hauler must pump all contents from all of the tanks in the system.
2. The tanks can be crushed in place and backfilled with free sand, granular material, concrete, or any other soil material that has been compacted to prevent settling.
3. If the tanks have to be removed, the tanks can be removed once not containing any free liquids and properly disposed of in a licensed landfill.

The soil dispersal area may be left in place intact. The soil dispersal area cannot be relocated to another location on the property unless it is licensed as a solid waste disposal area.

According to Part 115: Solid Waste Management of Act 451 of 1994 as amended R 299.4430 Type II landfill operator; prohibited wastes; procedures for excluding the receipt of prohibited waste.

- (2) The following wastes shall not be disposed of in a Type II landfill:
  - (c) Bulk or noncontainerized liquid waste or waste that contains free liquids unless the waste is household waste other than septic waste or the waste is leachate or gas condensate that is approved for recirculation under R299.4432.

R 229.4103

(w) "Liquid Waste" means any waste material that is determined to contain free liquids as defined by method 9095, the paint filter liquids test, as described in the publication entitled "Test Methods for Evaluating Solid Wastes, Physical-Chemical Methods" SW- 846, which is adopted by reference in R 299.4133. For purposes of the act and these rules, liquid waste does not include industrial waste sludges that are disposed of at a location other than a Type II landfill.

To ensure the soil dispersal area does not contain excess liquid waste before removal, it is helpful to dig a hole in the four corners of the soil dispersal area along with a hole in the middle to create sump pits that the liquid septage waste can pool and collect to be pumped out by the licensed septage hauler. This process may take numerous days to ensure the surrounding soil, pipes, and dispersal media are drained. This method should be completed prior to the removal of the dispersal area and bringing it to the ground surface. Removing saturated dispersal media to dry at the ground surface will threaten the public health of nearby residents and the contractors removing the material due to potential exposure to pathogens in the process.

Other supporting rules which do not allow spoiled soil dispersal area wastes to be stored onsite is from:

Part 117, Septage Waste Servicers, of Act 451 of 1994 as amended.

324.11710. Requirements to which permit subject

Sec. 11710. A site permit is subject to all of the following requirements:

(a) The septage waste disposed of shall be applied uniformly at agronomic rates.

Since the removed soil dispersal with liquid waste cannot be applied onsite together at a uniform agronomic rate, it would not meet the requirements to be land applied under this septage regulation.

All non-conventional dispersal media and septic tanks should be individually assessed and characterized for proper disposal at the appropriate licensed landfill. The soil dispersal area and tank may be disposed of in a licensed landfill if it is determined that free liquids are not included, and it meets the criteria for solid waste management. If you have any further questions regarding Materials Management including solid waste regulations (EGLE Materials Management Division) or Septage regulations (EGLE Drinking Water and Environmental Health Division) please contact the EGLE Environmental Assistance Center at 1-800-662-9278 or visit the following link at [Michigan.gov/EGLE](https://www.michigan.gov/EGLE) for more information pertaining to each program.