



SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES TO THE VENTURA COUNTY BUILDING CODE FOR ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS

On November 1, 2022, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors adopted the 2022 Ventura County Building Code (VCBC), which includes the 2022 California Building Standards Code and certain model codes, and local Ventura County amendments to these codes. The Ventura County Environmental Health Division is responsible for enforcing sections of the California Plumbing Code (CPC) and the VCBC related to Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS), also known as “septic systems”.

The 2022 CPC and 2022 VCBC will become effective January 1, 2023.

Revisions to the VCBC include editorial and formatting changes, as well as substantive amendments which will affect the plan review, design, and installation of OWTS in unincorporated Ventura County. This handout contains a summary of the major, substantive changes to the VCBC as they relate to the permitting of OWTS.

Major changes to VCBC related to OWTS are summarized below:

VCBC CHAPTER 7, SECTION 714.0 – DAMAGE TO PUBLIC SEWER OR PRIVATE SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEM

714.2(2) Holding Tanks – *Holding tanks for domestic waste shall only be permitted when existing OWTS has failed and replacement OWTS is not feasible due to setback restrictions and/or geological features.*

Explanation: This applies only to existing dwellings where OWTS have failed, and replacement options do not exist because of lot size constraints, lack of soil depth proximity to surface waterbodies or groundwater. Holding tanks are considered a short-term solution until some form of advanced treatment unit (ATU) or other option approved by this Division can be designed and installed.

VCBC APPENDIX H 301.0 – AREA OF DISPOSAL FIELDS AND SEEPAGE PITS

301.6 Seepage Pits - *Seepage pits may only be used where conditions are unsatisfactory for the installation of leach lines or leach beds, as determined by a qualified professional with the concurrence of the Administrative Authority.*

301.7 Seepage Pits in areas impacted by nitrate - *In areas of known nitrate impacted groundwater basins or impaired water bodies, no new conventional OWTS utilizing seepage pits*

shall be installed. Repairs to existing OWTS utilizing seepage pits in known nitrate impacted groundwater basins shall be based on pit performance testing.

Explanation: Seepage pits lack sufficient organic matter normally found in shallow soils, thereby minimizing or eliminating denitrification. Under these conditions, nitrates can migrate into the groundwater aquifer. Drought conditions may additionally amplify nitrates in groundwater basins due to reduced recharge and over drafting of the basin. Seepage pits disperse effluent in deep soils which are anoxic, or oxygen-poor, environments, where pathogens (especially viruses) may not be treated before the effluent reaches the water table. Seepage Pits place fluids below the root zone, where there is no immediate uptake of the liquid and nutrients by plants, nor is there the potential for treatment by evaporation or evapotranspiration.

VCBC APPENDIX H 601.0 – DISPOSAL FIELDS

601.9 Construction - ...*The depth of earth cover for leach lines, leaching beds, and disposal fields (sand filters) shall be a minimum of 12 inches and a maximum of 36 inches.*

Exception: *For repair or replacement to existing disposal fields, earth cover depth exceeding 36 inches shall be backfilled with clean rock. The depth of earth cover for leach lines shall be a minimum of 12 inches and a maximum of 36 inches.*

Table H 601.9 – General Disposal Field Requirements

	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Number of drain lines per field</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Length of each line</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>100 feet</i>
<i>Bottom width of trench</i>	<i>18 inches</i>	<i>36 inches</i>
<i>Spacing of lines, center-to-center</i>	<i>6 feet</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Depth of earth cover of lines</i>	<i>12 inches</i>	<i>36 inches (18 inches preferred)</i>
<i>Grade of lines</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>3 inches per 100 feet</i>
<i>Filter material under drain lines</i>	<i>12 inches</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Filter material over drain lines</i>	<i>2 inches</i>	<i>-</i>

Explanation: The maximum allowable depth of an infiltration surface is now limited to no more than 3 feet below final grade to adequately reaerate the soil and satisfy the daily oxygen demand of the applied wastewater. This applies to all new OWTS.

VCBC APPENDIX TABLE H-6

ABSORPTION AREA REQUIREMENTS

Footnote (e) Soil having a percolation rate over 90 min/inch is unsuitable for installation of conventional absorption system. An alternative absorption system, such as a drip system, is required for percolation rates over 90 min/inch.

Explanation: The percolation rate of 90 min/inch was implemented in the 2019 VCBC but omitted from this section. This provides clarification to this footnote.

For more information, please contact the Division at (805) 654-2813 or visit the OWTS Program webpage:

<https://vcrma.org/onsite-wastewater-treatment-systems>