

Regulatory Requirements for Common Sewer System Owners

Background

Proper construction and operation of common sewer systems is an important part of protecting the environment. Insufficient and/or improper operation can lead to plugged sewer lines and sanitary sewer overflows, resulting in costly repairs and/or possible penalties.



Currently, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality does not require all common sewer system owners to obtain operating permits (such as the Water Pollution Control Facilities or National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits). However, environmental regulations apply to all common sewer system owners and operators, regardless of need for a permit. This fact sheet summarizes these regulations.

What is a common sewer system?

Oregon law (Oregon Administrative Rules Division 340, Chapter 52) defines a common sewer as “a collecting sewer, and a part of the sewerage system which either initially or ultimately will serve two or more tax lots, parcels, or ownerships which may or may not be owned or controlled by a municipality either initially or ultimately.”

Plan submittal

State rules (Oregon Revised Statute 468B.055) prohibit construction, installation or modification of disposal systems, treatment works or sewage systems until plans and specifications are submitted to and approved in writing by DEQ. Plan submittals must contain:

- a. A completed Land Use Compatibility Statement.

- b. Two copies of engineering plans stamped and signed by an Oregon-registered professional engineer.
- c. The name of the person who will provide construction engineering/inspection services and certify construction inspection as outlined by Oregon law (OAR 340-52-040).
- d. A statement from the city that the city agrees to provide sewer service and that the city has the sewage system and treatment capacity to do so as required by OAR 340-52-015(3)(c).
- e. Technical activities fee to cover the cost of DEQ’s review.

Technical design criteria

Based on Oregon law, the system must meet technical design requirements for common sewers. Requirements for common sewer design are included in OAR 340-052, Appendix A. DEQ has also developed a document, “Sanitary Sewer Design Notes,” to assist in proper design of common sewers. These documents are available either from your local DEQ engineer or on DEQ’s website; from DEQ’s home page (www.oregon.gov/DEQ/) look under “Water Quality,” then go to “Rules,” “Division 52” and “Guidance documents.”

Operations and maintenance manual

Oregon law requires a written statement that an operations and maintenance manual acceptable to the owner and DEQ be prepared and that the manual must be completed prior to the system’s startup.

Financial plan

Oregon requires a long-term management and financial plan for the sewage system’s continuous maintenance, operation and replacement. This plan must show how the system will be financed. Generally, the ability to collect fees must be shown by either joining a municipal system or forming a special district. For documentation that a special district has been formed, DEQ requires submittal of a copy of the ordinance for the special district, finalized by the Oregon Secretary of State.

Operator certification

Oregon rules (ORS 340-Division 49) require all domestic wastewater systems, including common sewers, to be supervised by a certified operator.



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Water Quality Division Regional Engineers

Contacts:

Eastern Region:

- Heidi Williams, PE, Pendleton, 541-278-4608

Northwest Region:

- Michael Pinney, MS, PE, Portland, 503-229-5310

Western Region:

- Jon Gasik, MS, PE, Medford, 541-776-6010
- Tim McFetridge, PE, Salem, 503-378-8240

www.oregon.gov/DEQ/

Guidance documents may be found at:

www.deq.state.or.us/WQ/Rules/Div-52/Guidance

Alternative formats:

Alternative forms (Braille, large print) of this document can be made available. Contact DEQ Communications and Outreach, Portland, at 503 229-5696, or call toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696. Hearing-impaired persons may call 711.