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Fact Sheet 12/27/16

**New On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems Ordinance
Takes Effect January 5, 2017**

The Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health (Environmental Health) has historically managed Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) through a policy level agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board through its Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board since the 1950's. OWTS are commonly referred to as septic systems. Since the 1950's, several revisions to the Merced County Minimum Design Standards – Operation, Maintenance, and Site-Evaluation Policy for On-Site Sewage Disposal Systems (MDS Policy) have occurred.

On June 19, 2012, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) adopted Resolution No. 2012- 0032, adopting the Water Quality Control Policy for Siting, Design, Operation, and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS Policy). The OWTS Policy is intended to increase protection of water quality and public health in California by implementing a statewide, risk-based, tiered approach for the uniform regulation and management of OWTS installations and replacements, and sets the level of performance and protection expected for OWTS. Local agencies State-wide are required to comply with Resolution No. 2012-0032 within sixty (60) months of the policy adoption date.

In accordance with State requirements Environmental Health has converted the former MDS Policy into a new OWTS ordinance. Ordinance #1947 was formally adopted by the Merced County Board of Supervisors on December 6, 2016, establishing Chapter 9.54 in Merced County Code, entitled Regulations for On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems. Chapter 9.54 becomes effective on January 5, 2017.

Environmental Health has developed a companion Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems Local Agency Management Program (Merced County LAMP). The Merced County LAMP prescribes measures that will provide effective sewage treatment and achieve the purpose of the OWTS Policy in protecting water quality by maintaining the highest level of ground and surface water protection while allowing current use and development of properties in Merced County through the new Chapter 9.54 regulations.

The Merced County LAMP has been designed to retain a consistent and feasible locally controlled regulatory system for OWTS in Merced County, providing local designers, installers, and regulators with more flexibility for designing, installing and permitting OWTS while still ensuring the goals of the State OWTS Policy can be met. The Merced County LAMP will not require changes to existing or properly functioning OWTS. Page 2 of 4 The purpose of this Fact Sheet is to provide information to you, highlighting requirements in Chapter 9.54 as follows:

Plot plan requirements [Merced County Code, Chapter 9.54.080 § (G)]

1. Owner's name, street address, job address and telephone number;
2. A diagram of the parcel showing all property lines, dimensions, the assessor parcel number (APN), and North arrow orientation;
3. Names of streets and roads fronting the property, and any existing and proposed internal roads and vehicle access and/or parking areas including driveways;

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4. Dimensions, outlines, and locations of all existing and proposed structures, including hard surfaces such as patios, driveways and walks (e.g., earthen, asphalt, concrete and or gravelcovered);
5. Location of house sewer outlet and proposed location of septic tank and disposal system on the property;
6. Location and nature of any existing and proposed OWTS on the property, and dedicated replacement areas in the event of system failure;
7. Location of any existing trees which may affect location of septic tank or disposal areas and related systems.
8. Any prominent features on and adjacent to the property such as right-of-ways, easements, elevation changes, canals, creeks, lagoons, ponds, corrals;
9. Location of any existing or proposed well, in use or abandoned, either on this property or within 300 feet of the property lines;
10. A statement of the maximum expected waste volume per day: For dwelling units, pool houses, and/or guesthouses, provide the number of bedrooms and bathrooms (rooms with closets will be considered bedrooms for OWTS design purposes)
11. Source and description of domestic water supply;
12. Any public water supply well within 200 feet and any surface water intake for a public water system within 2,500 feet;
13. Total square footage of the lot, minimum useable disposal area on the lot, and all buildings;
14. Setback requirements of front, back and sides of property;
15. Name and telephone number of the preparer of the plot plan.

OWTS required setbacks [Merced County Code, Chapter 9.54.080 § (K)]

Table 2 – Minimum Horizontal Separation Distances (in feet)			
Facility	Septic Tank or Sewer Line	Leach Field	Leach Pit
Domestic Well*	50	100	150
Public Well*	100	150	200
Flowing Spring or Stream ¹	100	100	100
Drainage Course or Ephemeral Stream ²	25	50	50
Cut or Fill Bank ³	10	4 x H	4 x H
Property Line ⁴	25	50	75
Structures	5	10	15
Lake, Ponds, Reservoir, Wetlands ⁵	200	200	200
Public Water System Surface Water Intake	See foot notes 6 and 7 below	See foot notes 6 and 7 below	See foot notes 6 and 7 below
Unstable Land Mass	100	100	100

*Merced County Code, Chapter 9. Wells, Section 9.28.060. C. 5. A. requires a minimum 50 annular seal that is 2.5 times greater than the State minimum standard established by the Department of Water Resources.

1. As measured from the line which defines the limit of a 10-year frequency flood.
2. As measured from the edge of the drainage course or stream.
3. Distance in feet equal to four times the vertical height of the cut or fill.
4. This distance shall be maintained when individual wells are to be installed and the minimum distance between waste disposal and well cannot be assured.
5. As measured from the high water mark of the reservoir or flowing water body.
6. Where the effluent dispersal system is within 1,200 feet from a public water systems' surface water intake point, within the catchment of the drainage, and located such that it may impact water quality at the intake point such as upstream of the intake point for flowing water bodies, the dispersal system shall be no less than 400 feet from the high water mark of the reservoir, lake or flowing water body.
7. Where the effluent dispersal system is located more than 1,200 feet but less than 2,500 feet from a public water systems' surface water intake point, within the catchment of the drainage, and located such that it may impact water quality at the intake point such as upstream of the intake point for flowing water bodies, the dispersal system shall be no less than 200 feet from the high water mark of the reservoir, lake or flowing water body

Design Standards and Criteria

- Each compartment of any septic tank, where the septic tank is installed greater than two (2) feet below ground surface, and all holding tanks, shall be accessible via a water tight riser to or above grade, with a bolted or locked water-tight lid. The tank-riser interface shall be watertight. [MCC 9.54.080 § (L)(7)]. Risers will improve access for septic tank pumping, cleaning and replacement of effluent filters.
- NSF/ANSI certified effluent filters (less than 3/16" passage) are required for new and replacement septic tanks [MCC 9.54.080 § (L)(8)]. New or replacement septic tanks with an approved effluent filter will extend the life of the system by minimizing the solids/suspended solids entering the disposal area or leach field.
- The building or other sewage source stub out shall exit the building or other source no less than six (6) inches and not more than eighteen (18) inches adjacent to finish grade [MCC 9.54.080 § L(12)]. Proper construction, installation and depth of the stub out will provide improved access to the septic tank for periodic pumping, effluent filter assessment and allow for maximization of oxygen exchange and evaporation from the disposal area or leach field.

For additional information, please see the following URLs

- Chapter 9.54, Regulation of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems
<http://web2.co.merced.ca.us/pdfs/EnvironmentalHealth/OWTS-MCC-9-54-Ordinance.pdf>
- County Local Agency Program (LAMP) <http://www.co.merced.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/12618>
- SWRCB OWTS Policy
<http://www.co.merced.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/12617>
- SWRCB OWTS Policy Fact Sheet
<http://www.co.merced.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/12616>

For more information please call (209) 381-1100.