



State of Louisiana

Department of Health and Hospitals
Center for Environmental Health Services

FLOODING CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS WITH ONSITE SEWAGE SYSTEMS

In the aftermath of a hurricane or flooding, some homeowners may be experiencing difficulties with sewage systems not functioning properly.

If your sewage system was inundated and operates with a “sump pump” or “aerator”, these components were most likely damaged and may need to be repaired or replaced. For inspections and repair the Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health recommends that you contact a qualified maintenance provider.

When the sump pump is not working, the tanks will fill and may cause sewage to backup into your home. When the aerator does not work, sewage is not being properly treated and your sewage system may be discharging partially or untreated sewage.

The following are indications of potential problems with your onsite wastewater system:

- Alarms or lights going off
- Changes in your system’s normal operating sound
- Changes in the normal color of sewage in the aeration chamber (a grayish brown color, rather than chocolate brown, could indicate a problem)
- Excess solids, foam or scum in the unit
- Plumbing backups
- Sewage odors in the house or yard

Maintenance is key to the performance of any sewage system, but when flood waters inundate components, either mechanical or electrical, the need for proper maintenance to ensure proper functioning increases dramatically. The need for proper maintenance of your individual sewer system cannot be overemphasized.

Citizens with questions about this process should contact their local parish health units to obtain a list of qualified maintenance providers. The health unit contact numbers can be viewed at: <http://dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/newsroom/detail/2083>