



SEPTIC SYSTEM TIPS AFTER A FIRE

When rebuilding a home or structure destroyed by a fire, your existing septic system, may be utilized with approval from Ventura County Environmental Health Division. Older septic systems or cesspools may need to be brought into compliance with current codes, including connection to public sewer if available. Be sure to hire a licensed professional to perform work on your septic system. Historical records of your septic system may be available at: <http://www.vcenvhealth.org/isds/>

Requirements for Septic Systems When Rebuilding Your Home

Each property and septic system will be evaluated, permitted, and/or approved on a case-by-case basis. Here are some possible scenarios:

- 1) If the existing septic system is functioning and the property owner is planning to rebuild the same structure in the original location with no changes to the floorplan.
 - a. Provide proof the septic system is in good working order by having a licensed contractor evaluate the system.
 - b. If the existing the septic system is a cesspool, the system must be replaced to comply with current building standards.

- 2) If the existing septic system is functioning and the property owner wants to build a different house or structure (i.e., add bathrooms, bedrooms or enlarge the footprint)
 - a. A full certification of the septic system will be required, and will be processed and reviewed in the same manner as in a non-disaster situation, however;
 - b. A new septic system will be required if the existing septic system is undersized for the proposed house or structure. The application will be processed and reviewed in the same manner as in a non-disaster situation. The new septic system is required to comply with current building standards.

- 3) If the existing septic system, or any components, are damaged, a new septic system is required, and will be processed and reviewed in the same manner as in a non-disaster situation. The new septic system is required to be code conforming.

Checking for Septic System Damage

You may have some concerns about fire related impacts to your septic system. Most of their functional components of your septic system are below ground and are typically more resistant to fire damage. However, damage to your septic system may have occurred due high heat exposure to flames, smoke, ash, and power outages or equipment failure. Heavy fire-fighting equipment and vehicles on property may also damage underground septic systems.

When returning to your property, inspect the area where your septic system is located for signs of damage from fire and traffic from fire-fighting operations. The system may have been impacted if you observe:

- Plastic piping above ground has melted.
- Evidence of vehicle traffic in the area of the system.
- The raised system was in the direct line of fire (i.e. grass on top is scorched).
- There is damage in the area where the pipes enter the home.

You may want to have a professional check your septic system for damage and to verify proper function. You can have the septic tank pumped and inspected by a licensed septic pumper company. All septic pumper trucks operating in Ventura County are required to have a health permit from the Ventura County Environmental Health Division, so please verify the septic pumper company you hire is authorized to operate in Ventura County.

Contact Us

Ventura County Environmental Health Division

- Main Office Phone: 805/654-2813
- OWTS website: <https://vcrma.org/onsite-wastewater-treatment-systems>
- Information on Septic Pumper Truck Companies: <https://vcrma.org/septic-tankpumper-trucks>