

# Decommissioning a Septic Apparatus

Decommissioning a septic apparatus involves having the tank pumped out and either removing or backfilling the system.

## Decommissioning process

In order to decommission a septic apparatus the following steps must take place:

1. The septic apparatus is first to be pumped out by a licensed liquid-waste contractor.
2. The contractor will then provide a receipt.
3. The apparatus can then be removed. All septic tanks, soak wells and leach drains in the system must be found and removed. The most effective way to ensure that the entire system is removed is to follow the pipe work from each septic tank and/or soak well until it ends, ensuring that there is no outlet to another soak well or leach drain. Soak wells and leach drains may be connected in series and in parallel.
4. The holes left behind must then be backfilled with clean sand. It is also important that the sand be compacted to prevent any possible voids.

Where it is not practicable to completely remove the septic apparatus, then an alternative option is to backfill the entire system (septic tanks, soak wells, leach drains) where it remains in the ground.

Backfilling involves filling the system with clean sand that is then compacted to prevent any possible voids. Please note that, in the case of backfilling, **the base of the septic tanks must first be completely broken** to allow for proper drainage. It is recommended that, wherever possible, the septic system be completely removed, particularly where there may be an intention to further develop a property.

## Notifying the City of Joondalup

In order that an accurate record is kept of existing systems within the City, it is imperative that the City is notified upon decommission of the septic apparatus. This will then prevent future delays when processing development applications and may also prevent delays in settlement should the time come to sell the property.

A decommissioning form will need to be completed when notifying the City of decommissioning works. This form should be completed by the contractor/person who carried out the works and must indicate the number of septic tanks and soak wells and/or leach drains that were removed. The form is to be returned to the City with a copy of the contractor's receipt for removal of liquid waste (as evidence of the pumping out of the system).

## Timeframe for decommission

As septic systems can collapse without warning, the City of Joondalup recommends that any septic system should be decommissioned as soon as possible once connection to the sewerage system has been made. Legally, however, decommissioning is not an automatic requirement once sewerage connection is made.

Decommissioning becomes a legal requirement in the following instances:

- within 60 days of a change of use or ownership of the premises once reticulated sewerage has been connected to the property
- in advance of building works that will result in a structure being closer than 1.2m from the apparatus'

## Further information

If you wish to carry out decommissioning works or you require further information, please contact the City's Health and Environmental Services on **9400 4933**.