Hiring a contractor

Designing and installing a PSTS is a complex process, it’s recommended homeowners hire a certified contractor to install their PSTS. The system designer and system installer are responsible to ensure that the site has been sufficiently investigated so the most appropriate system is installed. Contractors also test and commission the system to ensure it complies with the Standard of Practice.

A list of certified contractors can be found at:

www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/CP_PrivateSewageContractorList.cfm

The contractor you hire must hold a current PS Certification to be able to obtain a PSTS installation permit. When you hire a contractor, make sure your contractor does the following as minimum in investigating your site and preparing your quote:

- Estimate the volume of sewage per day from your household
- Determine the size of your septic tank and the best location for your septic system
- Explore other suitable/alternative PSTS
- Identify any signs of seasonal saturation /high water tables that may affect your system design
- Confirm the clearance from water sources, water courses, property lines, dwellings, and buildings

Maintenance

Observe the installation process of your sewage treatment system so you can learn more about how the system works. Ensure your contractor provides you with a copy of all inspection reports and the Operation and Maintenance Manual. The Operation and Maintenance Manual will include details and information on the system design and equipment and is required by Article 2.1.2.8 of the SOP.

Alberta’s Safety System

Alberta Municipal Affairs works in partnership with the Safety Codes Council, municipalities, corporations, agencies, and other organizations, to deliver effective community-focused public safety programs and services to Albertans.

Questions or more information

Alberta Municipal Affairs
Safety Services Branch
16th Floor, Commerce Place
10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4

Phone toll-free: 1 (866) 421 6929
Fax: (780) 427 8686
Email: safety.services@gov.ab.ca
www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca

Safety Codes Council
Suite 1000, 10665 - Jasper Ave NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S9

Toll-free within Alberta:
Phone: 1 (888) 413 0099
Fax: 1 (888) 424 5134
Email: sccinfo@safetycodes.ab.ca
www.safetycodes.ab.ca

Please place your agency or municipality contact information in the space below.

These brochures may be updated periodically. They have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes and regulations currently in effect.

January 2012

ISBN 978-0-7785-7127-8
Your Private Sewage Treatment System (PSTS) does more than make sewage soak into the ground. Having a properly designed and installed PSTS will reduce the chance of system failures, protecting your family, neighbours, and the environment. It is important to understand the type of system that is best for the conditions of your site.

**Planning to install your own system?**

Not sure where you to begin? Here are some questions you should ask yourself before you install your PSTS.

**What are my legal responsibilities as a home-owner installing my own system?**

The owner of any thing, process or activity to which the Safety Codes Act applies shall ensure that it meets the requirements of the Act. This makes you, the owner, responsible to ensure compliance with the Private Sewage Standard of Practice.

**How do I evaluate my property to determine what system I need?**

Site evaluation requirements are set out in Part 7 of the Alberta Private Sewage Systems Standard of Practice (SOP). The site and soils evaluation will determine what type of system will work on your property.

Phone (780) 427-2767 or email lrccustserv@gov.ab.ca to order a SOP.

**Should I check with my local municipality prior to planning my PSTS?**

Some municipalities have established special requirements to address specific environment issues for sensitive areas. Your municipality can advise you of any bylaws that your PSTS installation must follow.

**Does it matter what type of soil my PSTS is on?**

Soil conditions and site topography are critical in effective sewage treatment. This may limit the options where you can install a PSTS on your property. Plan your PSTS around future projects you may be considering.

**Do I need a permit?**

You or your contractor must obtain a private sewage permit before installing your PSTS. This is a different permit from the plumbing permit required to install the plumbing system inside your home. To find out where to purchase a permit, contact your municipality or visit www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cp_permut_information.cfm

The permit process will engage a safety codes officer (SCO) who will work with you to ensure your installation and plans comply with the SOP. This will allow for adjustments in the planning stages and avoid costly corrections after construction. Owners are entitled to copies of the permit and inspection reports. These items are valuable in making payment as per the agreement with your contractor or when you sell your property. Failure to have a permit before beginning your project can result in substantial penalties under the Safety Codes Act.

**Do I have the proper information to submit with my permit application?**

After the property evaluation, the permit applicant must provide the permit issuing authority with detailed information on the design of the system in support of the permit application. A safety codes officer will review the design and issue the PSTS Permit before work can start. The application requires a System Design Support Document that includes the following:

- Site plan: A proper site plan showing distances to all features of the development including set back distances to property lines, water sources, water courses, septic tanks, packaged sewage treatment plants, final treatment components, buildings, basements, crawl spaces, cellars, and dwellings.

- Site evaluation: A site evaluation shall be done in accordance to the requirements of Article 7.1.1.2.(1) & (2) of the SOP.

- Soil profile: The characteristics of each soil profile investigated shall be described using Canadian System of Soil Classification system and include soil profile descriptions as set out in Article 7.1.1.2. (3) of the SOP.

- Lab reports on soil classification: A soil sample of the most limiting condition affecting the design shall be collected and analyzed at a laboratory using a recognized grain or particle size analysis method to determine the texture of the soil.

- Design Work Sheets: Work sheets showing calculations for treatment components.

Examples of four types of design documents can be viewed at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/CP_PSDS_DesignToolsAndForms.cfm

If you are still unclear on how to properly install your PSTS, call a certified contractor, your municipality, or Municipal Affairs for advice.

**ASK BEFORE YOU START**