

# Streamlining Wastewater Regulations for Alaskans

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The DEC recently amended 18 AAC 72 Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Regulations, effective October 1, 2023. This significant reorganization marks a substantial departure from the previous version, with changes that streamline processes, encourage efficiency, and empower Alaskans in wastewater management.

The amendments to the regulations include a major expansion in permit-by-rule and authorization-by-rule processes. This vital change allows for the installation of more wastewater systems without the need for prior approval and allow DEC to focus efforts on more high-risk systems. Additionally, this reorganization ensures that all wastewater systems, regardless of domestic or non-domestic nature, follow the same process, which makes the regulatory process much easier for the public.

The restructuring addresses the need for a streamlined approach to plan approvals. Conventional wastewater systems, such as septic tanks with subsurface leach fields, now have dedicated sections in the regulations, ensuring that relevant information is concentrated in one place. The introduction of alternative wastewater systems, for example Lifewater Engineering's "black box" system, allows for installations without the need for plan approval, promoting efficiency for the state and the public alike.

DEC's Engineering Support & Plan Review section manager Tonya Bear, is excited to see deregulation happen to alleviate workload strains within her department and offer Alaskans a faster path to installing wastewater systems.

"Of the approximately 400 plan reviews that my team does annually, I expect that number to drop by approximately 25 percent," said Bear.



*New onsite wastewater system replaces pit privy. Photo taken by DEC staff.*



*Conventional bed type leach field being installed. Photo taken by DEC staff.*

These regulatory changes demonstrate the state's commitment to improved wastewater management, allowing for the installation of more systems without plan approval. This reduction in plan reviews translates to a more efficient system, allowing the state to focus on high-risk systems and promoting progress for small businesses and homeowners alike.

If you are interested in learning more about wastewater regulation updates, resources, and webinars, go to <https://dec.alaska.gov/water/wastewater/engineering/2023-regulation-updates>.