

# A Quick and Easy Guide to Off Mains Drainage Regulations

What property owners need to know.



# A Quick and Easy Guide to Off Mains Drainage Regulations

Owning a property with a septic tank, sewage treatment plant or cesspit isn't always straightforward, and there are a number of regulations in place that you need to be aware of. These regulations perform an important role in making sure that drainage systems operate as they should do, and in reducing the risk of them polluting the environment.

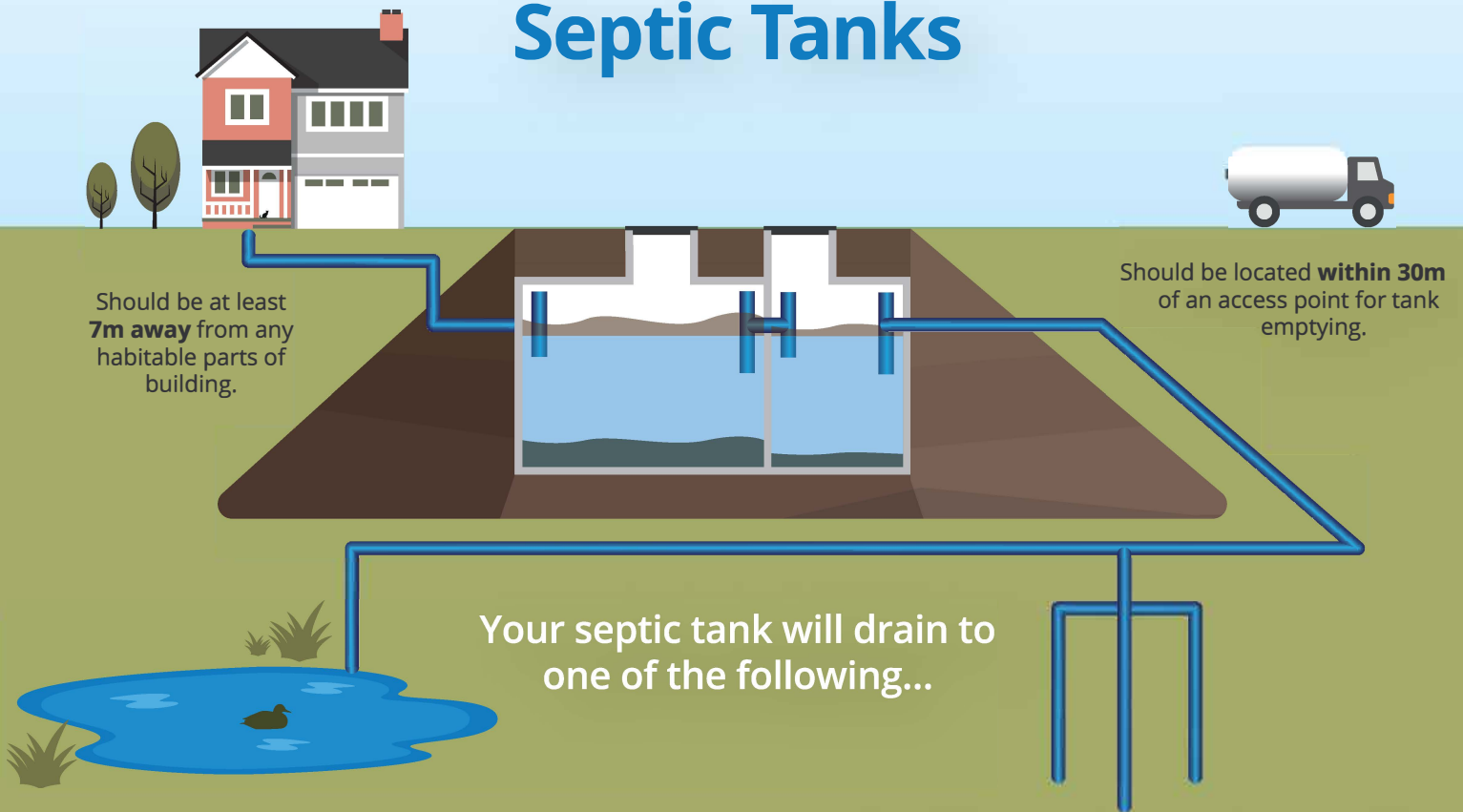
It's really important that you stay on the right side of the law as far as drainage systems go, because not adhering to the regulations isn't only potentially bad for the environment, it can also land you in trouble with your Local Authority and/or the Environment Agency. They have the authority to test any off mains drainage system they think might be causing a problem, and can take action against you if they find any issues.

Understanding regulations can be a challenge at the best of times, particularly when they relate to drainage systems which sit out of sight underground. There is no need to worry though, because UKDP are on your side. We have pored through pages and pages of documents, pulled out the most important bits, and put them into diagrams that we hope will make it easier to understand.

This Quick Guide will walk you through the main regulations you need to be aware of, whether you have a septic tank, cesspit or sewage treatment plant. Not sure what type of drainage system you have? Visit our website and read our guide "How to identify your off mains drainage system". Remember, whilst the regulations put the burden of responsibility on the property owner, we are here to help you make sense of it all, and guide you on what exactly that means for your property

Please note that this guide is a summary of the main points in current regulations affecting off mains drainage systems, and it isn't intended to provide legal advice.

# Septic Tanks



## A local watercourse or ditch



This provides no treatment of the waste. Discharges from septic tanks directly to a water course are not allowed under current regulations.



If your septic tank discharges to a watercourse, new DEFRA Environment Agency legislation means you **must replace or upgrade your system**.



If you are selling your property, you should agree, as a condition of sale, whether you or the buyer will be responsible for any system replacement or upgrade.

## What are your options?

Replace septic tank with a sewage treatment plant.

Install a drainage field.

## A drainage field



A perforated or slotted network of pipes which provide secondary treatment of the waste.



Should be **at least 10m** from a watercourse.



Should be **at least 15m** from any building.

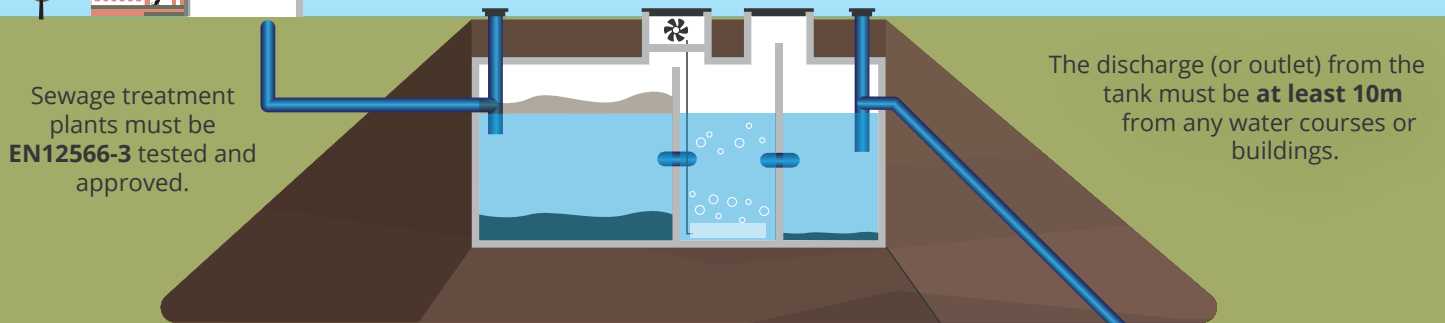


Should be **at least 50m** from a water supply e.g. well.

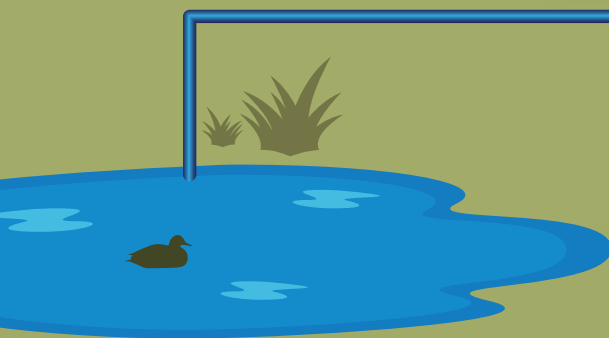


**No** access roads, driveways or paved areas should be located within the area.

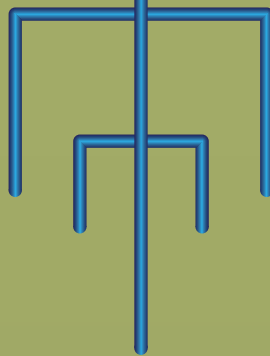
# Sewage Treatment Plants



Your treatment plant will drain to one of the following...



A local watercourse or ditch



A drainage field (or soakaway system)



If the plant needs electricity to operate, it should be able to function without power for up to 6 hours, or have a power supply that cannot be interrupted.



A perforated or slotted network of pipes which provide secondary treatment of the waste.



No part of the drainage field should be **within 2m** of a neighbouring boundary.



Should be **at least 15m** from any building.

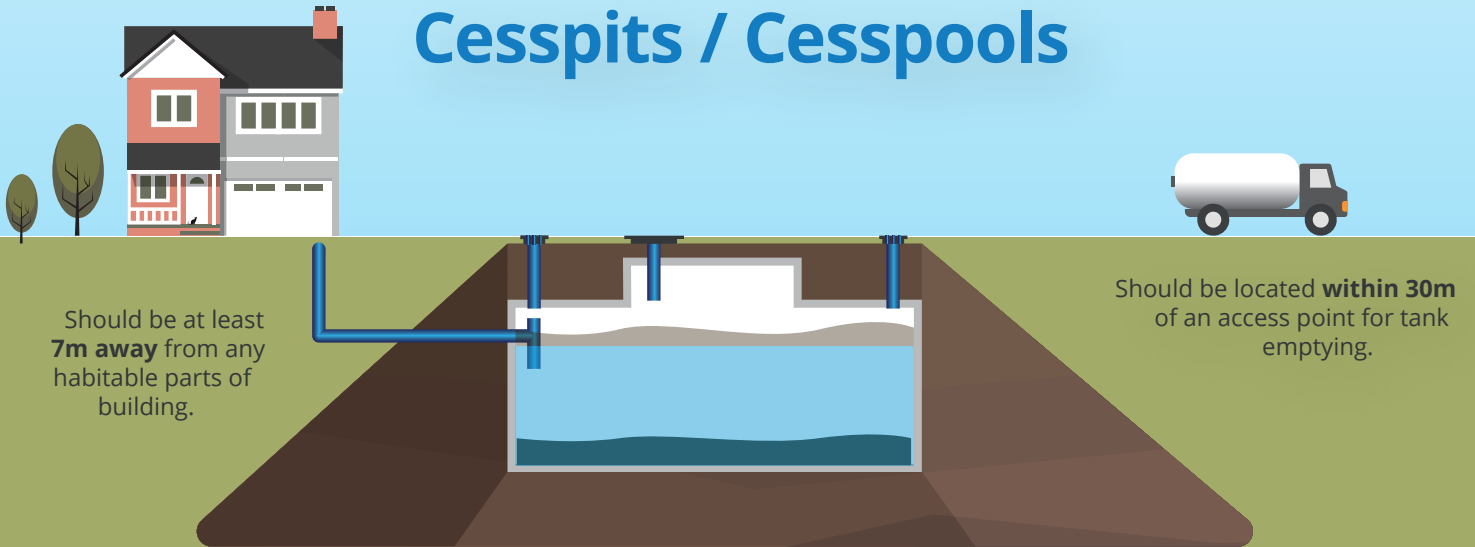


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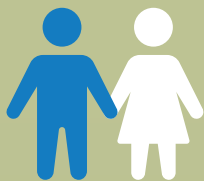
# Cesspits / Cesspools



Your cesspit /cesspool waste only leaves the tank when emptied. The tank has no 'outlet'.

## What is my minimum capacity?

The capacity of the tank below the inlet should be at least **18,000 litres for 2 users.**



**18,000 litres**

This should be increased by **6,800 litres for each additional user.**



**+6,800 litres**

## How do I know how many 'users' my house has?



General industry approach is based on the number of bedrooms, not people living in the property!

The formula is:

**(Number of bedrooms at property + 2)**



**3 bedrooms**

**= 5 users**

Cesspit capacity calculation:

18,000 (for 2 users)

20,400 (for 3 additional users)

**38,400** Total capacity required

## We're here to help

We hope that this guide has given you all the information you need to stay on the right side of regulations affecting septic tanks, cesspits and sewage treatment plants. Please remember that if you are in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland there may be some regional variations, so it's always best to check before you undertake any works:

**Natural Resources Wales (NRW):**

<https://naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/water-discharges/?lang=en>

**Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA):**

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/small-scale-sewage-discharges/>

**Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA):**

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/regulating-water-discharges>

There is a wealth of additional hints and tips for getting the most out of your drainage system available in the Guides and Blog sections of our website at [www.ukdpsolutions.co.uk](http://www.ukdpsolutions.co.uk), including videos to explain what's going on underground.

The team at UKDP is on hand to help with any off mains drainage needs – from resolving any problems, through to homebuyer drainage surveys, and helping you to get as much trouble-free service from your system as possible.

**Call us today on 0800 028 9903 or visit  
[www.ukdpsolutions.co.uk](http://www.ukdpsolutions.co.uk)**

## What our customers are saying

Complete customer satisfaction is our aim at UKDP, so we are always delighted when our customers tell us we are achieving that. Here is a small selection of some of the recent feedback we have received.

*"I have to admit to some initial scepticism about a service that almost sounded 'too good to be true' – but good and true it was! Everything was handled smoothly and professionally, and all I had to pay was my excess.*

*Another happy customer."*

**Ms S – Warwickshire**

*"UKDP have, from my first contact with them, been very helpful, informative and re-assuring even when all hope seemed lost for a favourable outcome. Their in-depth knowledge and sheer determination made our claim possible where I feel sure most companies would have given up!"*

**Mrs P – Essex**

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