

Wastewater Management for Fire Affected Properties

Septic systems—including both traditional septic tanks and modern treatment plants—are typically made from concrete or plastic. Many setups also include electrical components such as pumps, control boxes, and plastic pipework laid in trenches or drip irrigation systems.

During a fire, any of these parts can be damaged, so it's important to assess the entire system carefully before using it again.

Decommissioning of fire damaged wastewater/septic systems

If your wastewater/septic system was destroyed or damaged in the January 2026 bushfires the system may need to be decommissioned. This needs to be done safely and responsibly to protect your health and the environment.

Property owners, contractors and trades engaged to decommission and remove parts or all of a fire affected wastewater system must do so by choosing the following options:

Decommissioning of tanks onsite

Only concrete tanks, pump well and treatment plants can be decommissioned onsite.

- Concrete tanks must be pumped out by a licensed contractor and the inlet and outlet pipes sealed.
- Break a hole in the bottom of the tank, the lids and any parts of the tank walls that are above ground level, then collapse the lids/walls into the tank.
- Fill the tank with clean earth or sand.

Decommissioning – removal of tanks

Decommissioned plastic tanks must be removed from the site.

- Plastic septic tanks and treatment plants must be pumped out by a licensed contractor.
- The tanks are to be removed and transported to a licensed land fill facility for disposal.

Concrete tanks or treatment plants, after being pumped out, can be transported to a suitable licensed landfill site for disposal/ crushing as described above.

No approvals are required and Council does not need to be notified that a wastewater system has been decommissioned.

Trenches and irrigation lines

Any damaged plastic piping above the ground should be collected and disposed of at a licensed landfill or transfer station. Trenches that contain plastic pipes and rock that are not going to be reused can be left in the ground.

Wastewater system repair and replacement

If you believe your wastewater system is repairable, contact a licensed plumber to complete any repairs to make the system operational and meet the required performance standards.

Repairs to existing wastewater systems do not require Council approvals. (e.g. Replacing melted poly pipe connections from pump wells to pits, damaged tank lids or pit lids, replacing pumps and electrical connections).

If the system is damaged beyond repair, further Council approvals are needed for alterations or

replacements to prevent risks and to comply with regulations.

Wastewater system use for rebuilding or temporary accommodation

This section should be read alongside the planning and building requirements that apply to your situation. For more detailed guidance, refer to the

- [20260311-Planning-Exemptions-for-reconstruction-Final.pdf](#)
- [20260311-Making-temporary-accommodation-easier-for-homeowners-Final.pdf](#)
- [20260311-Temporary-Re-establishment-Buildings-easier-for-Businesses-Final.pdf](#)

If you intend to rebuild a residence or live in temporary accommodation onsite you may be able to reuse part or all of your existing wastewater system provided it is not damaged.

A wastewater permit is required when:

- You place temporary accommodation on the property that was your principal place of residence, details about the type of permit required are explained below.
- You are rebuilding and the existing system requires alteration, or a new system needs to be installed.
- Your residence is not damaged, but your existing wastewater system is damaged beyond repair.

If you are planning to rebuild but will initially be living in temporary accommodation, you are advised to seek approval for a wastewater system that is designed to meet the needs of a future residence.

What is the process for approval

If you decide to rebuild a residence or construct/install temporary accommodation and you intend to connect to the existing wastewater system, you must apply for a minor alteration permit.

Include with the application an inspection and report from a licensed plumber that contains following information:

- A site plan showing the system location, type, dimensions and connection to the building/temporary accommodation,
- Details about the condition of the system after the fire, including photos and the most recent service or maintenance report.

If Council holds an existing septic tank permit and plan for the property, these can be provided to the applicant on request.

What Happens After the Application and Plumber's Report is Submitted

- An Environmental Health Officer (EHO) will assess the application and plumber's report and may also need to inspect the system.
- If the existing system is deemed suitable, Council will issue a minor alteration permit allowing connection of wastewater fixtures from the temporary accommodation to the existing system.
- If the existing system is not suitable for use, the applicant will be required to apply for a permit for major alteration or install/replace the wastewater system as per our normal application process.

Applications for major alteration or replacement of a wastewater system may require a Land Capability Assessment (LCA). The requirement for an LCA is the discretion of Council in its assessment of any planning, building or wastewater application.

Applications for fire-affected properties will be prioritised where possible.

Questions regarding wastewater systems should be directed to Council's Environmental Health Officer, please contact the office on 1800 065 993.