

Septic System Alternative Treatment Technologies

Background

Residences with septic systems typically use one of several septic technologies: standard, capping fill, pressure distribution or sand filter systems. However, alternatives to these systems do exist for homeowners that require the use of septic systems. Under Oregon Administrative Rules, Chapter 340 Division 71, these alternatives are classified as Alternative Treatment Technologies (ATTs). Several of these ATTs offer advantages over conventional septic systems and are worth considering.

What is an ATT?

Alternative Treatment Technologies are wastewater treatment devices. These treatment devices take wastewater generated from a home or business and improve its quality before sending it to a drainfield for further treatment and dispersal.

These systems are generally installed in place of a sand filter treatment system. An ATT can also be used instead of a standard system, which includes a septic tank and drainfield. ATT systems may include such features as blowers or motors to provide aeration or filters made of materials other than sand. Typically the systems are designed to perform as well as a sand filter or provide additional treatment capabilities.

Why would I want an ATT?

Many homeowners are interested in ATTs for their property because of aesthetic reasons. ATTs typically are installed entirely below the ground surface with access lids being the only visible feature. These access lids and the different materials and components used in the systems can make repairs easier and more cost effective than other systems. Moreover, due to the modular nature of many ATTs they are typically easy to install and may have a smaller footprint than conventional systems.

Also, some areas around the state are experiencing problems with water pollution resulting from high densities of septic systems. High levels of wastewater treatment may be required in these areas to correct or avoid the problem. Many types of ATTs can provide higher levels of treatment and thus be more effective than conventional septic systems in protecting water quality.

How do I know if I qualify for an ATT?

As with any septic system, you will be required to have a site evaluation performed on your property. Once the state or county

environmental health specialist has reviewed the site and soil conditions, they can determine what types of systems can be used on your property.

What are regulatory requirements for ATTs?

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) rules require that an Operation and Maintenance (O&M) service contract is established and continued for the life of the system. The homeowner has the option of obtaining special training on the O&M system from the manufacturer if they wish to perform the service themselves. In addition, the maintenance provider or homeowner must submit an O&M report annually with a \$50 fee to the appropriate permitting authority, either DEQ or local county (this fee may vary by county). Also, the system must be inspected any time the property sells, and the system's maintenance records must be available to potential buyers.

How do I get a permit for an ATT?

Once DEQ approves a particular ATT for use in Oregon, permits for ATTs are issued by the same authority that issues permits for conventional septic systems in your area. In most counties, the local county office will issue the permit. If the county does not issue septic system permits, then you need to contact the local DEQ office for the pertinent information on permit requirements, fees and procedures.

Are there potential problems associated with ATTs?

Yes. ATTs can provide a high level of treatment to wastewater but often use a complicated process that includes blowers, pumps and other devices that require periodic inspections and maintenance to ensure that the system works to the best level possible. Proper maintenance not only protects the environment but also protects the homeowner's investment in their property.

Preventive maintenance for septic systems also helps the homeowner avoid costly repairs. Proper O&M needs to occur for the life of the system. Just as with your car, a little preventive maintenance can greatly prolong the life of your ATT system. You will need to consider the requirement for an ongoing O&M contract with a certified maintenance provider when you decide on the type of system you want to serve your house.

How do I find a maintenance provider?

Each vendor or manufacturer of ATTs that distributes in Oregon must train local maintenance providers to ensure their systems receive the



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Quality

Water Quality Onsite Program

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Western Region Roseburg

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Western Region Grants Pass

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Eastern Region Bend

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appropriate maintenance. A list of qualified maintenance providers is available from the distributor of the system you purchase.

In addition, DEQ certifies maintenance providers to ensure that persons working on ATT systems are qualified. A list of certified maintenance providers is available on DEQ's website.

For more information

For program information, please contact the program coordinator at the number listed in the right column on the first page of this fact sheet.

Alternative formats

Alternative formats (Braille, large type) of this document can be made available. Contact DEQ's Office of Communications & Outreach, Portland, at (503) 229-5696, or call toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696.

