



SEPTIC SYSTEM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PDEQ is developing short and long-term strategies to respond to the septic system issues arising as a result of the catastrophic Aspen Fire on Mt. Lemmon. Many of the questions and issues dealing with the septic systems will have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Below are a series of questions and answers related to septic systems and the fire.

Will the septic system survive the fire? In many cases the fire will not damage the septic system or the disposal fields. The heat from the fire should not damage a concrete septic tank. Fiberglass septic tanks are susceptible to damage from heat or weight and should be examined for any type of structural damage that may have been caused by the fire, falling trees, or heavy vehicles running over them during fire fighting efforts. The depth of the leach fields plays an important role in whether they may have been damaged or not. If the distribution pipe is close to the surface, it may have been damaged by heat from the fire and could have been damaged by any heavy vehicles that have driven over it. The deeper the distribution pipes, the less likely they would be damaged. In any case, a section of the piping should be exposed to determine if any damage has been done.

Is there anything that needs to be done with the septic system if it won't be in use for a while? Yes. The pipe between the septic tank and the house should be capped so debris from the rebuilding process won't find its way into the plumbing and into the septic tank. If the septic tank was being used on a year round basis or you know that the septic tank is due to be pumped then you should have the septic tank pumped. Pumping of the septic tank will eliminate odors and allows for better wastewater treatment when the system is used again.

How do I protect my septic system during the re-building process? The septic system needs to be protected during the re-building process to prevent damage. Install yellow caution tape or ropes around the perimeter of the septic tank and leach fields. This will keep heavy trucks and equipment from driving over it and damaging the septic system.

Will the rains and associated runoff affect my septic system? If there is a possibility of a large volume of runoff being channeled near or through the septic system, some

precautions should be taken such as constructing a small hand-built temporary dirt berm or barrier upstream of the septic system to divert the runoff away from the septic system. A large berm or machine-built berm will require additional county review before construction.

What do I need to do to install a new septic system? A “Notice of Intent To Discharge” along with other required documentation must be submitted to PDEQ. Submittal packages which include required information can be picked up at the PDEQ offices located at 201 N. Stone Avenue or 150 W. Congress.

Will I be able to install a new septic system if the old one is damaged or needs to be replaced on a lot of less than 1-acre? Yes, all lots less than 1 acre, which were recorded with the Pima County Recorder’s Office prior to December 5, 1985, are exempt from the minimum 1-acre requirement for installation of septic systems.