

IDENTIFICATION OF SEWAGE ASSOCIATED MALFUNCTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION

Public health needs are considered to be those health hazards and water pollution problems that involve discharging untreated or inadequately treated sewage to the surface of the ground or to the waters of the Commonwealth (including groundwater). Most commonly, these needs are found to be malfunctioning on-lot disposal systems (OLDS) and malfunctioning community on-lot disposal systems (COLDS). On-lot disposal system malfunctions are classified into three categories: confirmed, suspected and potential. Properly functioning on-lot systems are added to these groups forming a fourth category. When determining the public health needs of an area using OLDS/COLDS, all systems inventoried, mapped and analyzed must be placed into one of these four categories:

Confirmed Malfunctions: Those malfunctions documented by dye testing, laboratory test results, observation by a certified Sewage Enforcement Officer or a professional with experience in OLDS, "Best Technical Guidance" repair permits, and seasonally wet absorption areas. Also included are piped discharges from a single structure with direct evidence of sewage (i.e. direct observation of soap suds, food residue, solids, odors, etc.), reported system backups, malfunctions with photographic documentation or other similar evidence.

Suspected Malfunctions: Those systems exhibiting some malfunction characteristics such as abnormally green grass in the vicinity of an absorption area, piped discharges from one (or more than one) dwelling without direct evidence of sewage (i.e. no observation of soap suds, food residue, solids, odors, etc.), absorption areas located in known unsuitable soils (observed wetlands, rock outcropping, etc.), cesspools (in high density development) and pit (not vault) privies.

Potential Malfunctions: Those systems that appear to be operating satisfactorily but were constructed prior to system permitting requirements (i.e. preregulatory systems), systems located in areas extremely unlikely to receive permitting by current standards, systems constructed in areas having soils mapped as unsuitable or with severe limitations for OLDS and systems located on exceptionally steep slopes greater than 25 percent. Included as potential malfunctions are permits issued for OLDS repairs that meet Chapter 73 standards. While this needs category does not represent "stand alone" existing needs, the information may be utilized in a needs analysis to locate areas affected by poorly defined adverse circumstances. For example, clusters of legitimate repairs will often indicate areas requiring closer scrutiny.

No Malfunction: Those systems that appear to be operating satisfactorily, were constructed since the implementation of system permitting requirements, and appear to have been constructed in accordance with the permitting requirements in effect at the time of construction. For the purpose of needs identification, OLDS permitting under Act 537 became effective on May 15, 1972.