

## Septic Tank Regulations in England and Wales.

### Homeowners, what are your responsibilities?

Homeowners are responsible for their choice, installation and maintenance of their wastewater system under a new code of practice introduced by the Environment Agency. They have a legal responsibility to minimise the impact of your sewage waste if they manage it within the bounds of your property e.g. with a septic tank or sewage treatment plant (Binding Rules 2020, DEFRA, January 2015).

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)



### What is the situation?

Since January 2015, new rules relating to sewage treatment discharge came into effect in England and Wales. All direct discharge from a septic tank into a watercourse, such a river, a lake or a stream, will no longer be permitted. An upgrade or a replacement of the existing septic tank will be required.

Meaning now, in order to comply with the new 2020 septic tank regulations in England and Wales, homeowners will have to use a small sewage treatment plant to treat the sewage. These package treatment plants treat wastewater so it's clean enough to be discharged to surface water

### Who is affected?

Any homeowner, in England or Wales, who currently has a septic tank directly discharging into a watercourse.

### What are the deadlines?

This upgrade to your sewage treatment system must be in place by **January 1, 2020**, or when you sell the property (if selling before this date).

If the Environment Agency finds that you are currently polluting surface water as a result of discharge from a septic tank, you will be required to install a new system before 2020. In certain situations, you are given up to one year to upgrade, this is decided on a case by case basis.

### What are the options?

If your septic tank is discharging directly into a watercourse, three solutions are available:

1. **Connect to the main sewer. However**, this option is unavailable in a lot of remote areas.
2. **Install a drainage field or soakaway system.** This is also known as an infiltration system and allows the septic tank to discharge to the ground instead of the watercourse. Please note that, in many cases, the installation of a soakaway is not possible due to site constraints such as space and/or the soil not having sufficient soakaway potential such as clay soil.
3. **Upgrade your septic tank with a small sewage treatment plant**, eliminating the need for and drainage field.