

CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION

GUIDELINES FOR SEWAGE DISPOSAL FROM LAND DEVELOPMENTS

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide an explanation of the principal statutory authority and administrative procedures under which the Regional Board will fulfill its responsibilities to protect against pollution, nuisance, contamination, unreasonable degradation of water quality, and violation of water quality objectives as may occur from the disposal of sewage from land developments.

II. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

These guidelines are designed to be in accordance with the authorization and limitations contained in Division 7 of the California Water Code. Chapters, Articles, and Sections referred to hereinafter are in accordance with said Division 7.

Section 13260(a) states that "Any person discharging waste or proposing to discharge waste...that could affect the quality of the waters of the state, other than into a community sewer system,...shall file with the regional board of that region a report of the discharge, containing such information as may be required by the Board...". Section 13269 allows waiver of said reporting requirement by the Regional Board as to a specific discharge or a specific type of discharge where such waiver is not against the public interest. Such waiver shall be conditional and may be terminated at any time by the Board.

Article 5 of Chapter 4 requires substantial evidence in the record to support a prohibition of discharge of waste from existing or new subsurface disposal systems that such disposal system(s) will result in violation of water quality objectives, will impair present or future beneficial uses of water, will cause pollution, nuisance, or contamination, or will unreasonably degrade the quality of any waters of the state, and also indicates that the Regional Board may use the assurances of "an authorized public agency" that subsurface disposal systems will be appropriately designed, located, sized, spaced, constructed, and maintained.

III. APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES

These guidelines do not apply to:

- A. Discharge of non-domestic wastes.

- B. Discharge of sewage or other wastes via surface impoundments (whether or not infiltration is utilized).
- C. Any method of discharge of waste that requires a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

The above-listed discharges and/or methods of discharge are subject to prescription of waste discharge requirements designed on a case-by-case basis by the Regional Board.

IV. FINDINGS

The Regional Board finds:

- A. That it is in the public interest for the Regional Board to adopt guidelines for implementation of those provisions of said Division 7 that pertain to disposal of sewage from land developments.
- B. The County Governments of San Bernardino, Riverside, Imperial, and San Diego counties are authorized public agencies that have the capability to provide satisfactory assurance to the Regional Board that subsurface sewage disposal systems will be appropriately designed, located, sized, spaced, and constructed, and that it is in the public interest that the Regional Board use the technical assistance of these agencies to the fullest extent possible.
- C. To the extent that funds and staffing allow it is in the public interest to conduct wastewater assimilative capacity studies on hydrologic groundwater units, or within appropriate portions thereof, and to submit copies of the results of such studies to the particular county, city, or tribal government for its planning use, in addition to use by the Regional Board.

V. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- A. Existing Subsurface Discharges of Sewage
 - 1. Discharges Upon Which Waste Discharge Requirements Have Been Prescribed

Sewage discharges that are subject to adopted and effective Regional Board waste discharge requirements continue to be subject to discharge requirements until rescinded or revised. The discharger shall file an updated report of any material change or proposed change in the character, location, or volume of the discharge.

2. Discharges Upon Which Waste Discharge Requirements Have Not Been Prescribed

Persons who are in control of existing subsurface discharges of sewage upon which waste discharge requirements have not been prescribed are required to file a Report of Waste Discharge only:

- (a) When a Report of Waste Discharge is requested by the Regional Board, or its Executive Officer, or
- (b) When a material change is proposed in the character, location, or volume of the discharge, and the proposal is such that a Report of Waste Discharge is required under Part V.B of these guidelines

B. Proposed Subsurface Discharges of Sewage

Persons proposing a subsurface discharge of sewage, including persons proposing a material change in the character, location, or volume of an existing subsurface discharge, and specifically including any person proposing to develop land for sale or lease where the development will include subsurface disposal of sewage, shall file a Report of Waste Discharge with the Regional Board unless:

1. The proposed discharge is to a community sewer system upon which waste discharge requirements have been prescribed by the Regional Board; or
2. The proposed discharge is from not more than five proposed family units; or *20 mobile home spaces or 50 RV spaces or 50 motel units*
3. The proposed discharge is domestic sewage, only, from a proposed commercial or industrial source, and is not expected to exceed 5,000 gpd¹ on any single day, under hydraulic loading as computed from the then current edition of the Uniform Plumbing Code or other technical source acceptable to the local regulatory agency of county government.

VI. REPORTS AND FEE REQUIREMENTS

- A. When a Report of Waste Discharge is required by these guidelines, the report shall be filed:

¹Commercial and/or industrial dischargers of industrial waste are required to file a Report of Waste Discharge for their proposed industrial waste discharge, regardless of the volume of said discharge, which will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for prescription of waste discharge requirements.

1. As to existing discharges, not later than 60 days after request thereof by the Regional Board or by its Executive Officer.
 2. At least five working days prior to the need for a Regional Board clearance statement to a local regulatory agency of a city or county government.
 3. At least 120 days prior to commencement of a proposed discharge or material revision of an existing discharge.
- B. Each Report of Waste Discharge shall be accompanied by a filing fee in accordance with Subchapter 9, Chapter 3, Title 23, California Administrative Code.

VII. SOILS REPORT AND MAPS

Each Report of Waste Discharge required by these guidelines shall be accompanied by:

- A. A soils report, prepared by a California Registered Civil Engineer or Certified Engineering Geologist, which includes data for discharge evaluation under the criteria contained in Part VIII, below, and other information as may be considered necessary by the Regional Board and/or local regulatory agencies.
- B. A plan of the development; or, if it constitutes land division, a copy of any tentative or final subdivision map required under State law or local ordinances.

VIII. MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR SUBSURFACE DISCHARGE OF DOMESTIC WASTES

The following are minimum criteria considered necessary to prevent violation of water quality objectives, to prevent impairment of present or future beneficial uses of water, to prevent pollution, nuisance, or contamination, and to prevent unreasonable degradation of the quality of any waters of the state:

- A. In Areas Overlying Groundwaters Which Are Useable or potentially usable for Domestic Purposes
 1. Depth of soil between ground surface and high groundwater level or impervious strata in the disposal area shall not be less than 10 feet.

2. Depth of soil between the bottom of the disposal facility and fractured rock or high groundwater level shall be at least five feet for leach lines and 10 feet for seepage pits where the soil strata consists of at least 10 percent of the material passing a No. 200 sieve. Additional soil depth will be required as the effective grain size of the soil increases.
 3. Natural or finished ground slope in the disposal area shall not exceed 30 percent.
 4. The percolation rate in the disposal area shall not be greater than 60 minutes per inch if the discharge is to a leachfield, and not less than 1.1 gallons of effluent per square foot per day if the discharge is through a seepage pit. If the percolation rates are faster than 5 minutes per inch, additional testing will be required to determine compliance with A-2, or if percolation rates are faster than 5 minutes per inch, minimum depth to groundwater between the bottom of the disposal facilities and the anticipated high groundwater shall be 40 feet. (The percolation rates shall be determined in accordance with procedures prescribed by the appropriate public agency.)
- B. Other structural limitations, such as horizontal distance between
1. A sewage leaching facility and a water well used for domestic purposes, a surface water used for domestic purposes or for water-contact sports, or other surface impoundment accessible to the public shall be as specified by the local regulatory agency.
- C. In Areas Overlying Groundwaters Which Are Unuseable for Domestic or Agricultural Purposes:
1. Depth of permeable soil between ground surface and groundwater level shall not be less than four feet.
 2. Depth of permeable soil between the bottom of the disposal facility and impervious strata shall not be less than four feet.
 3. The acceptable percolation rate shall be determined by the county regulatory agency in consideration of the required disposal area and other technical factors, in consultation with the Regional Board's Executive Officer or his designee.

Compliance with the above-listed Criteria A through C, as well as compliance with local codes and/or policies regulating sewage disposal, will be as determined technically by the appropriate county regulatory agency, subject to review by the Regional Board as to the provisions of said Criteria A through C.

IX. DISCHARGE PROHIBITIONS

Factors that will cause the need to consider prohibition of discharge include but are not limited to the following:

- A. Failure to meet the minimum criteria in Part VIII, above.
- B. A finding by the Regional Board that discharge from existing or proposed individual sewage disposal systems or from community sewage collection and disposal systems which utilize subsurface disposal, will violate water quality objectives, or will impair present or future beneficial uses of water, or will cause a pollution, nuisance, or contamination, or will unreasonably degrade the quality of any waters of the state.

The prohibition as to existing subsurface disposal systems may be in the form of a time schedule for elimination of the discharge, or other appropriate action.

X. INNOVATIVE WASTE TREATMENT SYSTEMS

Innovative waste treatment systems as alternates to septic tank-subsurface disposal systems will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but must conform with these guidelines and provide protection to water quality and public health at least equivalent to conventional septic tank-subsurface disposal systems.

XI. WAIVERS AS CONDITIONAL

All waivers of Reports of Waste Discharge contained or implied in these guidelines, and all waivers of adoption of waste discharge requirements, set forth in these guidelines are conditional, and such waivers may be terminated in whole or in part at any time by the Regional Board. Any discharger of an existing or proposed subsurface discharge of sewage, other than a discharger into a community sewer system, may, at the option of the Regional Board, be required to file a Report of Waste Discharge, and waste discharge requirements may be adopted for any subsurface discharge of sewage.

XII. MORE STRINGENT WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS

These guidelines shall not be construed to prevent the Regional Board from adopting waste discharge requirements for the subsurface discharge of sewage which are more stringent than the minimum criteria set forth in these guidelines, where greater stringency is necessary in the opinion of the Regional Board.

XIII. TECHNICAL AND MONITORING REPORTS

Subsurface dischargers of sewage may be required to provide technical and monitoring reports in accordance with Water Code Section 13267.

XIV. WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLANS AND OTHER REGIONAL BOARD ACTIONS

These guidelines do not apply to any area where the subsurface discharge of sewage is prohibited under the Regional Board's water quality control plans or by other action of the Regional Board.

XV. REQUEST FOR EXCEPTION

Request for exception to any portion or portions of the above guidelines shall be made in writing to the Regional Executive Officer. The proponent's request shall include detailed explanation of the pertinent physical, economic, and other factors, and such other information as is deemed necessary in the opinion of the Regional Executive Officer for his determination. Such exception, if granted, shall be site-specific. Any person who considers to be aggrieved by the determination of the Regional Executive Officer may request review by the Regional Board.