



Frequently Asked Questions

Septic to Sewer Initiative in Yucca Valley

Protecting the region's drinking water

Why did the Regional Water Board prohibit septic systems in Yucca Valley?

The Warren subbasin of the Morongo Groundwater Basin, which is the main source of drinking water for Yucca Valley residents, faces a number of threats.

Prior to November 2019, the principal method for households and businesses in this region to dispose of wastewater was via septic tanks, which contaminate the surrounding soil and waterways. Between 1993 and 2005, the number of homes approved for construction in Yucca Valley increased significantly, multiplying the household waste threat.

A [2003 United States Geological Survey study](#) found significant amounts of nitrate in the Warren subbasin, the known result of wastewater seeping into groundwater.

Nitrates pose [a significant threat to public health \(2\)](#). Nitrate can interfere with the ability of red blood cells to carry oxygen, producing a condition called methemoglobinemia. It is of greatest concern in infants, whose immature stomach environment enables the conversion of nitrate to nitrite, which is then absorbed into the blood stream and potentially causing "blue baby syndrome." High nitrate levels may also affect the oxygen-carrying ability of the blood of pregnant women.

To eliminate this avoidable threat, the [Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board](#) adopted the [Septic Tank Prohibition for the Town of Yucca Valley \(Prohibition on May 19, 2011\)](#).

What efforts were made to inform affected residents that they would need to hook up to the new sewer system?

[Hi-Desert Water District](#) sent out notifications to all residents and businesses in the [Phase I](#) area six months prior to their respective availability date and again when their sewer was available. The Regional Board sent additional notifications to residents and businesses if they had not yet connected after the six months of sewer availability. The compliance date for Phase I was December 31, 2023.

Subsequent to this outreach, sewage system construction, and windows of connection availability, notices of violation were sent multiple times before enforcement actions





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were taken against those property owners who had not communicated with the Hi-Desert Water District or the Regional Board.

As a result of outreach efforts and the economic and technical assistance made available by the Regional Board, the vast majority of residents have connected to the sewage system.

Regional board staff made multiple and sustained efforts to communicate with those who have not yet complied to inform them of the requirements. These efforts included phone calls, emails, and in-person visits.

How much time was given from the time the sewer was available for connection?

Outreach to residents and businesses began April 30, 2018, and technical and economic support was made available for those who were eligible. Communications explained the coming requirements, providing notice many years in advance to prepare and secure needed funding for connection costs.

Once the sewage system was constructed and available, residents and businesses were given 6 months to connect. Some residents and businesses were provided with extensions to allow time for construction or other issues.

Phase I properties that:

- have yet to comply with the requirements and
- have had the same owners since the date a sewer connection for their property became available

are considered to have been out of compliance since July 2022 (stage 10 of Phase I).

Hi-Desert Water District is [currently entering Phase II of the project](#).

What is the enforcement process?

The regional board's enforcement staff will seek a Cease-and-Desist order against those property owners who fail to voluntarily comply by connecting to the sewer system. The order sets enforceable due dates by when the property owners must connect.

If property owners then fail to meet the dates in the order, daily-penalty amounts are accrued. An Administrative Civil Liability Complaint then levies the fine.

How do I know if I am in the prohibition area and required to connect to the new sewage system?

You can see if you are in Phase I of the prohibition by entering your address into [this map](#): <https://www.yvsewermap.com/>.

Additional information about how to connect is available at Hi-Desert Water District's Phase I Sewer Project [webpage](https://www.hwd.com/223/Phase-I): <https://www.hwd.com/223/Phase-I>



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