

## FACT SHEET



### INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

## Closure of Wastewater Treatment Plants Office of Water Quality - Compliance Branch

(317) 232-4464 • (800) 451-6027

[www.idem.IN.gov](http://www.idem.IN.gov)

100 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46204

### Description:

- On occasion, wastewater treatment plants are permanently removed from service. Various reasons include that older equipment is being replaced by new equipment, an industrial facility is closing and its onsite wastewater treatment facility is no longer needed, or the wastestream is being connected to another system such as a municipal collection system.
- This fact sheet is being provided in response to inquiries the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's (IDEM's) Office of Water Quality (OWQ) often receives on the requirements associated with the closure and demolition of retired wastewater treatment facilities.

### Health and Environmental Impacts:

- Wastewater treatment plants that are removed from use may contain residual wastewater and sludge.
- Abandoned equipment such as wastewater treatment plants may pose physical risks to humans who may come into contact with them, along with any number of long term environmental risks, risks to wildlife, regulatory issues, and liabilities to the owner.

### Role of the Responsible Party:

Following are several items the responsible party(ies) will need to address when removing wastewater equipment from service or closing a facility altogether.

- Once the facility is removed from service and has ceased to have a discharge, the owner or operator needs to submit a request to **terminate the NPDES permit or other operating permits** to: IDEM, Office of Water Quality, Compliance Data Section, 100 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2251.
- The responsible party(ies) must submit closure plans for approval before doing work.
  - **Closure plans for wastewater treatment plants:** In the closure and demolition of abandoned facilities, any residual wastewater or solids must be properly disposed. **Residual wastewater or solids cannot be left in place or released to the ground or surface waters.** Closure plans for wastewater treatment plants should be submitted to: IDEM, Office of Water Quality, Compliance Data Section, 100 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2251.
  - **Closure plans for lagoons:** IDEM's Office of Land Quality (OLQ) has rules regarding the closure of wastewater lagoons and ponds. The closure of a lagoon or a lagoon system requires a closure plan that is subject to the review and approval of OLQ before the work may be done. Closure plans for lagoons should be submitted to: IDEM, Office of Land Quality, Solid Waste Permits, 100 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2251.
- IDEM has established the following **closure guidelines for all wastewater treatment facilities:**
  - **Closure plans:** When there are plans to permanently remove a wastewater treatment plant from use, it is appropriate for a "closure plan" or outline to be prepared by the owner or other responsible party.

- Residual wastewater: Residual wastewater may often be discharged to a nearby sanitary sewer, when available, with the written permission and knowledge of the owner of the sewer. Alternatively, the responsible party may hire a licensed wastewater hauler to remove residual liquid wastes.
- Sludges and other solids: Sludges and other solids must be sent to a proper solid waste disposal facility or land applied under a valid land application permit.
  - If the responsible party knows or has reason to suspect that any sludge, even sludge from a sanitary wastewater treatment plant, may contain significant amounts of metals or other pollutants causing it to be a listed or characteristic hazardous waste, a hazardous waste determination is required. Shipment off-site as a hazardous waste would likely require an EPA ID number. Hazardous waste must be shipped to a permitted hazardous waste Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facility (TSDF). Hazardous waste standards must be met for activities prior to shipping, to ensure proper planning, handling, record keeping and reporting.
- Treatment and laboratory chemicals: Left over treatment or laboratory chemicals must also be removed from the site. If possible, the responsible party could arrange to return the chemicals to the manufacturer, sell or give the chemicals to a different wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) to be used for their intended purpose, or have them disposed of properly.
  - Some WWTP chemicals could be hazardous waste. All chemical products that are to be discarded should have a hazardous waste determination and be handled accordingly. If these materials are left on-site over 90 days after the WWTP ceases operation, they may become a regulated hazardous waste and must be managed accordingly.
- Scrap metals: Scrap metals may be taken to a salvage yard.
- Tanks: If there are tanks, they cannot be abandoned. They should either be removed from the site or filled in place using an inert solid or other such approved fill material.
- Pending enforcement action(s): If there is an enforcement action involving the site, follow-up concerns for the property would be a part of the final resolution of violations.
- Demolition:
  - IDEM does not require the responsible party(ies) to obtain a permit for demolition of abandoned wastewater treatment equipment, but any residual wastewater or solids must be properly disposed, which means they cannot be left in place nor can they be released to the ground or surface waters.
  - Additionally, all facilities must be inspected by an Indiana licensed asbestos inspector prior to the commencement of demolition or renovation activities. Even if no asbestos is present in the facility, proper notification of demolition or renovation activity must still be followed.
  - The liabilities associated with closure of wastewater treatment facilities provide ample reason to have them properly demolished.

### **IDEM's Role:**

- IDEM is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while allowing for the environmentally sound operation of industrial, agricultural, commercial, and governmental activities vital to a prosperous economy.
- To ensure public safety and environmental protection, IDEM works to ensure that retired wastewater treatment facilities are properly closed in a timely manner, that sludge from closed units is properly managed, that illegal open dumping violations do not occur due to the mismanagement of sludge from abandoned units, and that all closure plans and demolition activities comply with asbestos, solid waste, hazardous waste and wastewater regulations.

- IDEM's Office of Water Quality administers and enforces the state rules for wastewater disposal. IDEM's Office of Land Quality administers and enforces the state rules for solid and hazardous waste disposal. IDEM's Office of Air Quality oversees compliance with asbestos regulations at demolition projects.

**For More Information:**

- For information on the proper closure and demolition of abandoned wastewater treatment plants, contact IDEM's Office of Water Quality wastewater inspectors at (317) 234-2579 or, toll free, at (800) 451-6027, ext. 4-2579.
- For information on closure plans for lagoons, contact the Solid Waste Permit Section in IDEM's Office of Land Quality at (317) 232-8871 or, toll free, at (800) 451-6027, ext. 2-8871.
- For information on hazardous waste determinations, contact the the Compliance and Response Branch in IDEM's Office of Land Quality at (317) 234-6923. For guidance on waste determinations, visit <http://www.in.gov/idem/files/la-062-gg.pdf>.
- For information on asbestos compliance, demolition requirements and notification procedures, visit the IDEM website at [www.IN.gov/idem/airquality/2581.htm](http://www.IN.gov/idem/airquality/2581.htm).
- To report environmental or public health hazards associated with abandoned wastewater treatment facilities, contact the IDEM Complaint Coordinator at (317) 232-4464, toll free at (800) 451-6027, ext. 2-4464, or submit a complaint online at [www.in.gov/idem/5274.htm](http://www.in.gov/idem/5274.htm).
- To report an environmental emergency such as a release or spill to the environment, call IDEM's 24-Hour Spill Line, toll free, at (888) 233-7745.