

ELECTRICAL POWER OUTAGES and ONSITE WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

An electrical power outage can impact you and your residential onsite wastewater treatment system particularly if you still have water during the outage.

A gravity collection system feeding into a septic tank and leachfield will continue to operate properly and you will be able to continue using your system. However, if your system contains components which require electricity to operate, the wastewater will collect in the system during the electrical outage and have to be treated and dispersed when electrical service resumes. These components usually have a reserve or alarm capacity that allows *some* use during electrical power outages or when components break.

If there is an electrical power outage and you have electrically-operated components:

- Limit water usage to essentials such as toilet flushing and hand washing. Laundry, bathing, showers, and dishwashing should be minimized or eliminated.
- Stop all water use if electrical outage is extended or the plumbing begins to drain slowly. Slow-draining plumbing may indicate that the reserve capacity is exceeded and the system is full.

Once power is restored:

Allow the system to continue to operate normally until the water level recedes in the system. A time dosed system may take a 24 hour period to have all of the stored water distributed and the high water alarm deactivated. System components that require electricity are usually equipped with a high water alarm. This alarm may sound when the power is restored based on your water usage during the power outage. You can silence the alarm if it has a silence switch option. If the alarm remains activated more than 24 hours, contact your service provider.

Should you have any questions, you can call the Environmental Health Department at (209) 223-6439 or the consultant that designed the system.