

# Monterey County Health Department Environmental Health Bureau

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## Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS)

### Watertight Tank Testing Methodology

New and replacement septic tanks and pump chambers must be approved for use in Monterey County and conform to the Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau (EHB) Local Agency Management Program for Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (LAMP).

At a minimum, all septic tanks shall be watertight and constructed of corrosion resistant material. Septic tanks shall also conform to the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO), National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) or American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards and be capable of being pumped out completely without the need to backfill with water to maintain structural integrity. All new septic tanks shall be equipped with an effluent filter. The filter shall remain accessible for future maintenance or replacement. EHB shall be notified prior to the initiation of the following testing procedure and may require that EHB staff witness any or all of the following steps of the Watertight Testing Procedure.

#### Watertight Testing Procedure

1. Tank must be properly set in approved location and ready to be connected for use.
  - a. If risers are to be used, they must be installed prior to initiating watertight testing.
  - b. If required to maintain structural integrity (e.g. poly tanks), the septic tank may be backfilled prior to testing.
2. Inlet and outlet are capped or plugged.
3. Water is then added to the tank to a point of at least two inches above the highest connected point (e.g. inlet or outlet).
  - a. If risers are installed, this point will be at least 2 inches above the highest riser connection.
  - b. If the septic tank is concrete, the tank is filled 24 hours prior to the initiating the test to allow the dry concrete tank to absorb water. If the tank is fiberglass or polyethylene, proceed to the next step.
4. Mark the water level in an easily detectable manner.
5. Allow 1 hour to elapse after filling the septic tank to the designated level.
6. Check level and visually inspect outside of the tank, if visible (i.e. no backfill present), for evidence of water loss.
7. If no evidence of water loss, the tank is considered watertight.
  - a. If the tank lost water, investigate the source of loss and repair if possible. Reinitiate the test once repairs have been completed.
  - b. If tank fails after repairs and cannot be made watertight, the tank must be replaced. The replacement tank must pass the watertight test.
8. Complete the approved "Watertight Testing Certification" form and submit to EHB prior to approval of septic tank installation.

\* An alternate watertight testing method by vacuum may be allowed by EHB on a case by case basis. The test shall be conducted per ASTM C1719, or equivalent. In all instances, the EHB Watertight Testing Procedure shall be preferred.