TOWARDS BETTER ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT IN VICTORIA -
COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERIES

FACT SHEET 9:
SERVICE AGENTS RESPONSIBILITIES

This fact sheet provides an overview of the responsibilities of service agents when undertaking work associated with package treatment systems for domestic properties and commercial properties and public facilities. This fact sheet may also assist property owners who have package treatment systems and utilise the services of a service agent.

Please note,information and facts contained in this publication were correct at the time of printing and production.

Printed: December 2012

9.1 WHAT SHOULD A SERVICING AGENT DO?

- **Knowledge and skills** – a service agent should be trained in the installation, operation and service requirements of each system they service. The system manufacturers should provide this training;
- **Accreditation** – a service agent must be accredited in writing by the system manufacturer in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Certificate of Approval for each package treatment system approved for installation in Victoria that they service;
- **Servicing frequency** – prescribed servicing must occur at the frequency nominated within the Council Permit to Use and relevant Certificate of Approval to best maintain system performance;
- **Reporting** – the servicing agent should complete a service report for each system service undertaken. This report must state that the system is functioning correctly or, alternatively, the remedial action that has been recommended. This report should be forwarded to the council and the property owner. The report should include copies of all laboratory analytical test results and the inspection and maintenance reports for the period.

9.2 COMMON PROBLEMS:

- Package treatment plants are mechanical systems made up of many parts which can break down. There needs to be a functioning electronic alarm fitted to the system to warn of any malfunctions and it must be working correctly;
- If the system includes a chlorination treatment stage then there needs to be a constant supply of chlorine tablets. This is the responsibility of the servicing agents to check during their quarterly service;
- The irrigation system can become damaged (e.g. drippers damaged by kangaroos looking for water to drink), exhibit installation faults, or become blocked by small particles in the wastewater and soil;
- Within the package treatment plant:
  - The tank can become too full - wastewater levels should not be higher than the outlet;
  - Too much sludge can accumulate in the tank. This can result in untreated wastewater heavy with solids leaving the tank and clogging up pipes and absorption trenches;
  - Too much water is being introduced into the system. This can also result in solids being pushed out of the tank and clogging the system components. This can be because of poor wastewater flow rate calculations or overuse of the system;
  - Excessive detergents and chemicals going into the system can result in the bacteria being killed off, halting the digestion process;
  - The bacteria that support digestion of wastewater inside the tank can grow too rapidly. This can cause the system components and irrigation network to clog with colonies of bacteria.

9.3 SERVICING REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE:

- Package treatment plants need to be de-sludged every three to five years or as deemed necessary after the system has been inspected;
- Confirmation of whether the mechanical components of the system (e.g. pumps) are functioning properly and are coping with the demands of the system i.e. handling the volume of the wastewater being generated;
- Confirmation of whether an alarm with an appropriate visual and/or audio with mute facility

is installed and capable of indicating the failure of key mechanical components of the system such as a pump or other aeration component;

- Details of effluent that is sampled annually and analysed by a NATA approved laboratory to ensure the effluent produced meets the standards set by the Environment Protection Authority (Victoria). The effluent from a package treatment plant must meet the requirements of the Certificate of Approval for its installation as well as the requirements of the disposal system.

A detailed analysis of the effluent disposal area should be carried out to ensure that the irrigation system is functioning as it was designed to, has been installed correctly, is not damaged or in disrepair, and has sufficient capacity to cater for the volume of effluent being generated. Servicing agents have as much responsibility for the satisfactory operation of the effluent disposal area as the actual installer and system owner.

9.4 LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

Failure to service a package treatment system in accordance with the relevant Certificate of Approval and Permit to Install and Permit to Use issued by the local council may be an offence under the *Environment Protection Act 1970*. Penalty Infringement Notices to the sum of $600 may apply to those involved or, worse, you could be taken to court!

It is also a good idea to ensure you have read and understood any conditions listed on the Permit to Install or Permit to Use, which may affect the servicing of the septic tank system. Servicing agents must not physically alter any part of a package treatment system without the approval of local council.

9.5 WHO TO CONTACT:

PRODUCED AND FUNDED BY:

LODDON SHIRE

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

ehpa Improve - Maintain - Protect

* ALL WASTEWATER IS TO BE RETAINED ON THE PROPERTY