

What to do with your private onsite wastewater treatment system (POWTS) after a flood?

When should I pump my POWTS tank(s)?

If the ground is still saturated around the tank, do not pump it. Pumping the tank could cause it to try to float or pop out of the ground and damage inlet and outlet pipes. Flooding of the POWTS tank may have lifted the floating crust of fats and grease in the treatment tank. Conserve water while the POWTS dries out. Once the area around the POWTS has dried out, the POWTS tank (and pump tank) should be evaluated to determine whether they need to be cleaned out.

What should I do if there's water in my drainfield or seepage cell?

The best solution is to drastically reduce water use. Conserve water while the POWTS dries out. When the groundwater level goes down, the level in seepage cell will drop too. If you have dripping faucets or leaking toilet tank valves, you need to fix them in order to get back to normal more quickly. Any floodwater in the house should not be dumped into a sink or toilet because it will go into the overloaded POWTS. Consider turning off power at the circuit box if the POWTS has a pump. The wastewater will not be treated and will become a source of pollution. If you turn off the pump, any sewage you put down a drain can only go as far as the treatment tank, and may back up into your house. Inspect electrical connections for damage before restoring electricity to use a pump.

What should I do if my treatment or holding tank has risen up, or has collapsed? What if there are holes or settled spots around my tank?

Contact the Portage County Onsite Waste Specialist at the Planning and Zoning Department at 715-346-1334, as soon as possible. A permit will be needed for any required repairs. These permits can be expedited in cases of emergency, such as floods. You may also call the Portage County Register of Deeds at 715-346-1428 or 715-346-1997, with any other unrelated questions.

For safety sake, keep people and pets away from the area of the damaged tank(s).

What if sewage has backed up into my house?

If sewage has backed up into the basement, clean the area and disinfect thoroughly. Keep children and pets away from areas where sewage was present. Sewage contains organisms that can make you sick.