

ALABAMA UTILITIES MANAGEMENT

HOMEOWNER'S MANUAL

Wastewater Collection, Treatment, and Disposal

Congratulations on your new home and having it connected to the Alabama Utilities Management, LLC wastewater system! The utility which owns and operates the system serving your home is responsible for maintenance and operation of all system components following the outfall line from your home.

A wastewater system is your sewer system. While the water company brings water into your home, your wastewater system takes water and wastewater from your home. Any water system issues should be brought to the attention of and addressed by your water utility provider.

If a wastewater problem arises that appears to be beyond the plumbing in your home and the outfall line from your home, you should contact your service provider listed in the Important Facts section at the back of this manual. Your system will also work better and last longer if you learn what can go into it - and what cannot. Little effort is required. Just read and practice the do's and don'ts that follow. Every member of your household should be familiar with them.

Please retain this manual with important papers related to your home purchase. At the end of this manual, you will also find information regarding your monthly billing.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR INSIDE THE HOUSE

There are a number of do's and don'ts that will help ensure a long life and minimal maintenance for your system. As a general rule, nothing should be disposed into any wastewater system that has not first been ingested, other than toilet tissue, mild detergents, and wash water. Here are some additional guidelines:

DON'T flush dangerous and damaging substances into your wastewater treatment system. Specifically, do not flush:

- Pharmaceuticals.
- Excessive amounts of bath or body oils.
- Water softener backwash.
- Flammable or toxic products.
- Household cleaners, especially floor wax and rug cleaners.
- Chlorine bleach, chlorides, and pool or spa products.
- Pesticides, herbicides, agricultural chemicals, or fertilizers.
- Degreasing solvents.

DON'T use special additives that are touted to enhance the performance of your system. Additives can cause major damage to the collection system. The natural microorganisms that grow in your system generate their own enzymes that are sufficient for breaking down and digesting nutrients in the wastewater.

DON'T leave interior faucets on to protect water lines during cold spells. A running faucet can easily increase your wastewater flow by 1,000 to 3,000 gallons per day and hydraulically overload your system. Instead, properly insulate or heat your faucets and plumbing.

DON'T use excessive amounts of water. Using 50 gallons per person per day is typical.

DON'T ignore leaky plumbing fixtures; repair them. A leaky toilet can waste up to 2,000 gallons of water in a single day. Leaky plumbing fixtures increase your water bill, waste natural resources, and overload your system.

DON'T dig without knowing the location of your wastewater treatment system. As much as possible, plan all landscaping and permanent outdoor structures before installation. State law requires that utilities be notified before beginning excavation. Call your state One-Call center (811) before any digging is done.

DON'T drive over your tank or any buried components in your system, unless it has been equipped with a special traffic lid. If the system is subject to possible traffic, put up a barricade or a row of shrubs.

DON'T dump RV waste into your wastewater treatment system and tanks when waste from the holding tank or additives have been used. When dumped directly into the pumping vault, RV waste clogs or fouls equipment, causing undue maintenance and repair costs.

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DON'T ever connect rain gutters or storm drains to the sewer or allow surface water to drain into it. Do not discharge hot tub water into your system. The additional water will increase costs, reduce the capacity of the collection and treatment systems, and flood the drain field. It can also wash excess solids through the tank.

HELPFUL PRACTICES

DO use your trash can to dispose of substances that cause maintenance problems and/or increase the need for septage pumping. Dispose of the following with your trash:

- Egg shells, cantaloupe seeds, gum, coffee grounds, tea bags, chewing tobacco, cigarette butts, and seafood shells.
- Paper towels, newspapers, sanitary napkins, diapers, kitty litter, and candy wrappers.
- Cooking grease.
- Rags, large amounts of hair, dental floss, sanitary napkins, tampons, diapers, and sanitary wipes such as baby wipes or disposable floor wipes.
- Q-Tips, cat litter, aquarium rocks or gravel, glass, metal, wood, rubber gloves or other disposable gloves, and fireplace ashes.

DO collect grease in a container and dispose of it with your trash. Avoid using a garbage disposal excessively. Compost scraps or dispose of them with your trash. Food byproducts accelerate the need for pumping and increase maintenance.

DO conserve water:

- Take shorter showers. Be cautious about excessive use of larger soaking tubs.
- Do not let water run unnecessarily while brushing teeth or washing hands, food, dishes, and similar tasks.
- Wash dishes and clothes when you have a full load.
- Use water-saving devices on faucets and showerheads.

DO keep lint out of your wastewater treatment system by cleaning the line filters on your washing machine and dryer before every load. Installing a supplemental lint filter on your washing machine would be a good precautionary measure.

DO keep the tank access lid secure to the riser at all times. If bolts are lost or damaged, contact your local maintenance technician. Only a qualified electrician or authorized installer/operator should work on your control panel. Before anyone does any work on either the wiring on the level-control floats and pumps in the vault or on the control panel itself, it is imperative to first switch the isolation fuse/breaker and the circuit breaker in the panel to the Off positions, then switch off the power to the system at the main breaker.

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE AND THE CONTROL PANEL

Mounted on the outside wall is a control panel box with a red light on top of the panel.

DO familiarize yourself with the location of your wastewater treatment system and electrical control panel.

DO take immediate action to correct the problem whenever an alarm condition occurs; it sounds like a smoke alarm.

DON'T turn off the main circuit breaker to the wastewater pumps when going on vacation. If there is infiltration or inflow into the system, the pumps will need to be on to handle it.

GRINDER PUMPS

The following is important information about your home wastewater system that is equipped with a grinder pump.

What is a grinder pump? A grinder pump is a pump unit located at a low point in your house or in your yard where the wastewater drains from the house. It grinds the wastewater and pumps it to the sewer main in the front-yard right-of-way.

How does a grinder pump work? Wastewater from your home flows down your drains and collects in a holding tank. When the wastewater in the tank reaches a certain level, it automatically activates the pump to grind your sewage into small particles. The pump then generates enough pressure to push the wastewater up the hill through your sewer line to the sewer main.

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Why do I need a grinder pump? The wastewater system to which you are connected is a low-pressure system. Your home's plumbing includes a grinder pump system. Grinder pumps are used in neighborhoods where site conditions such as building elevations and ground slopes make construction of conventional gravity sewers impractical. Grinder pumps made development of your neighborhood and home possible. Your grinder pump system is safe and efficiently pumps wastewater created inside your home into the wastewater collection and treatment system serving your property.

What should I do if my grinder pump alarm goes off? If there is too much flow going into your grinder pump unit, the high sewage level will automatically trigger an alarm horn and light to alert you of the problem. In many instances, the problem could be an excessive amount of flow to the grinder pump. You should take the following steps:

- Immediately discontinue your water use to prevent overflow.
- Wait fifteen minutes before taking further action. A high level of water usage will sometimes cause the alarm to come on. This situation is self-correcting. If the pump is operating correctly, the wet well will automatically be pumped down and the alarm light will turn off. If the alarm light is still on after fifteen minutes, contact a licensed plumber or the supplier of the pump to resolve the problem. Never attempt to open the tank cover or the electrical panel box.

What should I do if there is a power outage? Your grinder pump is powered by electricity and will not function during a power outage. To prevent waste from backing up into the lowest sink, tub, or toilet in your home, severely limit the interior use of water until power is restored. This means not showering or washing dishes and limiting flushing the toilet. While your holding tank has a limited capacity, if the system was already full and ready to pump just before the power went out, there will be even less storage available.

What can I do to protect my grinder pump? A properly maintained grinder pump should be able to handle wastewater from the kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and similar sources. However, some chemicals and substances can adversely impact a grinder pump and may cause safety hazards. Please check the labels on all chemicals before using or disposing. Never connect a sump pump to the grinder pump. It is not advisable to plant flowers or shrubs or place such items as fences, decorative pilings, fishponds, and similar items within the immediate area, as damage to the pump, underground electrical, or piping systems may occur. Electrical power and alarm wires are buried under the ground between the control panel and the tank.

What should I do with my pump when I go on vacation? If you plan on being away for several days, replace the wastewater in the tank with clean water to help minimize odors. First run water from an inside faucet long enough for the grinder pump to start working. After the pump starts, turn the inside faucet off. The pump will run until the tank is empty and shut off automatically. This process will cleanse the pump and leave it filled with a minimum of clean water. Always leave the power to the pump on. This allows the heating element inside the pump to operate, which helps eliminate condensation and freezing.

MONTHLY BILLING

Alabama Utilities Management, LLC bills all of its wastewater systems in arrears, meaning you pay for the previous month's service during the current month. If you begin service in the middle of a billing cycle, your initial bill will be the prorated amount for the previous month of service. If you end service during a billing cycle, your final bill will also be prorated for the previous month of service. Please also note that while the monthly service fee is always the same, there is an annual increase in rates that we will notify you of prior to the start of the new year.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding your bill, starting service, or issues with your service, please contact our customer service department at 205.514.2849.

We can also be reached by email at billing@alabamautilitiesmanagement.com.

Have your customer number or service address available when contacting us.