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TITLE: Accessory Dwelling Units and Onsite Sewage Treatment Systems	Next Review Date: Nov 2021

POLICY

In order to protect the public health from failing or inadequate sewage treatment, it is the policy of the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department to assure that any accessory dwelling unit (ADU) that is planned, proposed, constructed or operated on land that is serviced by onsite sewage systems is connected to an approved onsite system that meets the requirements of Santa Barbara County Code, Chapter 18C, Article 1.

AUTHORITY

18C-3(A)(1) establishes that any structure, regardless of use, that produces wastewater shall have adequate wastewater treatment as required by the California Plumbing Code as amended and adopted by the County of Santa Barbara in Chapter 10, Article IV. Wastewater treatment shall be accomplished by means of an approved onsite wastewater treatment system or by connection to a public sewer.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance to designers of onsite sewage systems and to staff when planning for and approving accessory dwelling units that are on or will be on properties that use onsite sewage treatment systems.

PROCEDURE

General Requirements:

- Construction of an ADU shall not be considered equivalent to a lot split and shall not be subject to the lot size requirements for the creation of new lots.
- An ADU shall be considered a modification.
- No permit shall be issued for an ADU that will be connected to a malfunctioning or failing onsite sewage system.

- An ADU shall only be connected to an existing onsite sewage system if the existing sewage system has:
 - a. the hydraulic capacity for both the primary residence and the accessory dwelling unit;
 - b. sufficient reserve area for both the accessory dwelling unit and the primary residence; and
 - c. dual dispersal fields installed, when required pursuant to 18C-5(E)(2).
- Connection to an existing onsite sewage system that consists of a septic tank and seepage pits, including designated reserve area, shall require a system upgrade to include supplemental treatment on lots less than 5 acres, or when the maximum absorption capacity of the seepage pit exceeds 8,000 gallons per day (gpd), or the absorption capacity is greater than 500 gpd but less and 1,000 gpd.

Conversion of existing accessory structures or new detached ADUs:

- An ADU constructed by converting an existing accessory structure or by building a new detached structure may be connected to an existing onsite sewage system only if the all of the requirements under “General Requirements” are met.
- Conversion of an existing accessory structure or construction of a new detached ADU shall not be approved if the conversion or construction would impinge on the primary and/or reserve area of the primary residence. If the primary residence does not have a previously approved reserve area designated, a reserve area shall be identified and designated before approving the ADU.
- The onsite sewage system for an ADU resulting from the conversion of an existing accessory structure, or construction of a new detached ADU, shall meet all the siting, design and construction standards contained in Chapter 18-C, Article 1.

ADU design flow:

- An ADU that will be contained within the primary residence shall have a minimum design flow of 125 gpd for the first bedroom and 75 gpd for each additional bedroom. The primary residence that contains the ADU shall have a minimum design flow of 375 gpd plus 75 gpd for each additional bedroom above three bedrooms. For example, a three bedroom residence with a 1 bedroom ADU would have a design capacity of 500 gpd.
- A detached ADU, whether created by conversion of an existing accessory structure or by a new detached structure, shall have a minimum design capacity of 375 gpd.

REFERENCES

[Chapter 18-C, Article 1 of the Santa Barbara County Code](#)
[State Water Resources Control Board OWTS Policy - Water Quality Control Policy for Siting, Design, Operation and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems](#)