

University of Arizona's Recommendations  
for  
*Inspecting Properties with Cesspools*  
(Developed by Kitt Farrell-Poe & Jake Garrett)

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Cesspools are excavations that receive household wastewater. They are essentially outhouses with running water. Since there is little or no treatment, cesspools can contaminate groundwater. Also, cesspools often have no lids covering the opening causing safety concerns. Both situations are the reason that cesspools have not been approved for use in Arizona since 1976. In fact, current Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) regulations on cesspools specifically prohibit their use for sewage disposal [R18-9-A309(A)(4) and R18-5-408(D)].

### **Inspector's Responsibilities**

So what do you do if, while you are inspecting a property for the Transfer of Ownership program, you discover that the property has a cesspool as its only waste disposal system? The University of Arizona's Onsite Wastewater Education Program recommends taking the following steps:

1. Once you have discovered that the property has a cesspool for its waste disposal, your inspection becomes one of full disclosure to the buyer and no longer qualifies as an inspection for the Transfer of Ownership program as ADEQ does not recognize cesspools as legitimate onsite wastewater treatment facilities.
2. Fill out the Report of Inspection to Section 7. At Section 7, write in "**CESSPOOL.**"
3. Draw a diagonal line through the remainder of the pages to Section 11 as these sections only apply to recognized, legitimate onsite wastewater treatment systems.
4. In Section 11 (Other Comments), write in your observations on the hydraulic and structural soundness of the cesspool.
  - a. Because the amount of information you should be providing will exceed the one line offered in Section 11, provide your comments in a separate attachment (therefore, Section 11 should state "**see attachment(s)**" or "**see attached letter.**"
  - b. Fully describe your findings including how the cesspool was installed (timber, concrete block, car body, etc.).
  - c. If possible include/attach pictures of the inside of the cesspool to give visual support of your findings.
  - d. Include/attach the two ADEQ rule citations supporting your reasoning for not continuing with the Transfer of Ownership inspection.
  - e. Include/attach any county ordinances, policies, etc.
  - f. You may want to include a copy of the 2008 letter from ADEQ on their position on cesspools.
5. In Section 12, DO NOT complete Part A. Part A is for legal, legitimate, recognized onsite wastewater treatment facilities.
6. In Section 13, DO NOT sign unless you a) cross-out the words "on-site wastewater treatment facility" and b) replace those words with "cesspool."

### **Real Estate Agent's Responsibilities:**

If you find that your client has a cesspool as their wastewater disposal system, it is important to provide full disclosure to potential buyers. There are qualified inspectors for the Transfer of Ownership inspection program, and you can find them by going to the ADEQ website [<http://www.azdeq.gov/environ/water/engineering/not.html>]. Under no circumstances should you *ever* engage a non-qualified inspector for transfer of ownership inspections.

Arizona Administrative Code Prohibiting Use of Cesspools

**R18-9-A309(A)(4).**

A person shall not use a cesspool for sewage disposal.

**R18-5-408(D).**

The use of cesspools is prohibited.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING A  
 REPORT OF INSPECTION  
 FOR AN ON-SITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

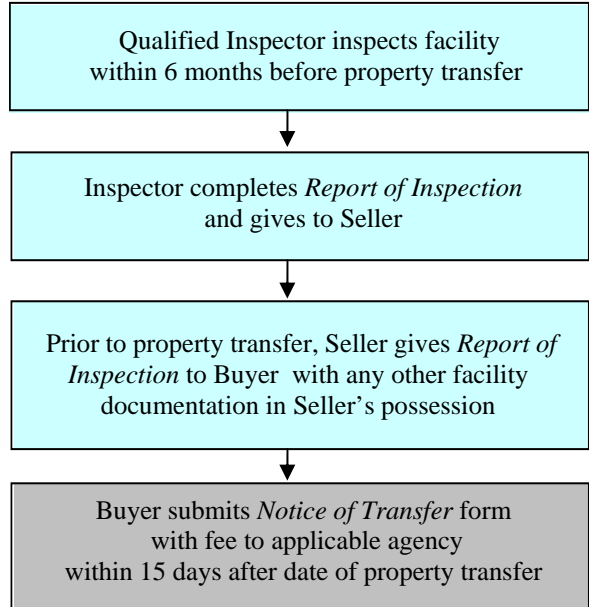
Any person selling or transferring ownership of a property served by an on-site wastewater treatment facility (including a conventional septic tank system or and alternative on-site wastewater treatment facility) must retain a qualified Inspector to inspect the facility within six months prior to transferring ownership of the property (Arizona Administrative Code, A.A.C. R18-9-A316). See Figure 1.

An inspector that is qualified under A.A.C. R18-9-A316, must complete the attached *Report of Inspection* form, and provide it to the seller as required. If there is more than one on-site system in use on the property, the Inspector completes a *Report of Inspection* form for each system.

Before the transfer date (closing date) of the property, the seller provides the buyer with the completed *Report of Inspection* form and any other documents in their possession that relate to the permitting or operation and maintenance of the septic tanks systems or alternative on-site wastewater treatment facility. **DO NOT submit this *Report of Inspection* form to ADEQ or the local county permitting agency. The Buyer retains this form after receiving it from the Seller.**

Within 15 calendar days after the date of property transfer, the Buyer submits a complete *Notice of Transfer* form for the change of ownership, and files it with the applicable agency indicated in the *Notice of Transfer* instructions. Information from this *Report of Inspection* form is needed to fill out the *Notice of Transfer* that must be submitted by the Buyer. **Effective Feb. 2, 2007, you can file your *Notice of Transfer* online. Visit the ADEQ website at [https://static.azdeq.gov/forms/onsite\\_not.pdf](https://static.azdeq.gov/forms/onsite_not.pdf) for more information.**

Qualified inspectors are required to completely and accurately fill out this form to the best of their knowledge. The form has been updated to include:  
 Section 1 — Facility Information  
 Section 2 — General Treatment and Disposal Works  
 Section 3 — Design Flow and Septic Tank Sizing  
 Section 4 — Septic Tank Inspection and Plumbing: Complete this section if the site is served by a conventional system (septic tank to leachfield - 4.02 general permit) or if the septic tank is used with an alternative system.  
 Section 5 — Alternative System: Complete this section only if an alternative system is used at the site (4.03 – 4.22 general permit). This section can be combined with Section 4 if a septic tank is used.



**Figure 1. Flowchart of Notice of Transfer Process**



TAX PARCEL NO. \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF INSPECTION: \_\_\_\_\_

Initials of Inspector \_\_\_\_\_

### PROPERTY TRANSFER INSPECTION FORM

Arizona Administrative Code R18-9-A303.B, -A304.A & C, -A309A, and -A316

Note: While this document is approved by ADEQ, it is intended to be used by contractors. ADEQ staff does not facilitate or perform property transfer inspections.

Property Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Seller/Transferor Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Seller/Transferor Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Inspector Information

Inspector Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspector qualifications and proof of training:  
 Check all that apply and provide answers as needed.

- ADEQ-Recognized Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Professional Engineer     Registered Sanitarian     Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator  
 (Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_)    (Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_)    (Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)
- Arizona Licensed Contractor for License Category: \_\_\_\_\_
- Owner of pumper truck and ADEQ Truck Registration No: \_\_\_\_\_
- Employee Name Performing Inspection: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Records Obtained by Inspector

- Were there facility permit, construction and/or operational records available for the inspection?    Yes    No
- Check all that apply:
- Discharge Authorization (or Verification) issued on or after January 1, 2001, pursuant to R18-9-A301(D)(2)(c) Permit No. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Approval of Construction, or other official permitting documents issued by ADEQ or its delegated county agency before January 1, 2001, Permit No. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Site plan, plot plan, "as-built" drawings, or similar documents
  - Documents relating to operation and/or maintenance (alternative systems)
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### Cesspool

Is a cesspool serving the property?    Yes    No

Use of a cesspool is VIOLATION OF A.A.C. R18-9-A309. A.4. A cesspool shall not be used for sewage disposal.

If a cesspool is found on a property subject to the Transfer Inspection, per R18-9-A316, the Inspector shall:  
 Disclose to the Buyer that the inspection no longer qualifies as an inspection for the Transfer of Ownership program and that ADEQ does not recognize a cesspool as a legitimate on-site wastewater treatment facility.

SIGNATURE OF INSPECTOR: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary of Inspection**

**On-Site Wastewater Treatment Facility Inspection Overview**

On-Site Wastewater Treatment Facility Serves (check all that apply):

- Residence/Dwelling   
  Single family   
  Multi- family/Shared   
  Commercial  
 Other (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Facility (check all that apply):

- Conventional System   
  Alternative System   
  Gray Water System Observed

Number of On-Site Wastewater Systems on the property: \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: A separate Report of Inspection is required for each On-Site Wastewater System.*

Age of inspected On-Site Wastewater Treatment Facility: \_\_\_\_\_ years

If estimated, explain how it was determined: \_\_\_\_\_

**On-site Wastewater Treatment Facility**

Septic Tank Condition:    Operational    Operational with concerns    Not Operational  
 (for details, see Sections 3 and 4)

Disposal Works Condition:    Operational    Operational with concerns    Not Operational  
 (for details, see Sections 4.1)

Alternative System - On-Site System Condition:    Operational    Operational with concerns    Not Operational  
 (for details, see Section 5)

Alternative Disposal Works Condition:    Operational    Operational with concerns    Not Operational  
 (for details, see Section 5.1)

For any operational concerns see page 7 in the comments section.

**1. Facility Information**

A) Domestic Water Source:

- Hauled Water   
  Municipal System   
  Private Water Company   
  Shared Private Well   
  Private Well

If a well is nearby, state the distance from Well to Wastewater System \_\_\_\_\_

B) Type of Wastewater Source:

- Residential   
  Commercial   
  Other \_\_\_\_\_

C) Occupancy/Use:    \_\_\_ Full Time    \_\_\_ Seasonal/Part Time    \_\_\_ Vacant    \_\_\_ Unknown

**2. General Treatment and Disposal Works**

This system consists of the following systems and technology:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.02 Conventional Septic Tank/ Disposal System | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.05 Gravelless Trench                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Septic Tank                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.06 Natural Seal Evapotranspiration Bed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disposal Trench                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.07 Lined Evapotranspiration Bed        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disposal Bed                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.08 Wisconsin Mound                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disposal by Chamber Technology                    | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.09 Engineered Pad System               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disposal by Seepage Pit                           | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.10 Intermittent Sand Filter            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.03 Composting Toilet                         | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.11 Peat Filter                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.04 Pressure Distribution System              | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.12 Textile Filter                      |

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.13 Denitrifying System Using Separated Wastewater Streams | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.20 Disinfection Device  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.14 Sewage Vault   | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.21 Surface Disposal   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.15 Aerobic System   | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.22 Subsurface Drip Irrigation Disposal                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.16 Nitrate-Reactive Media Filter                          | <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.23 Design flow from 3,000 to less than 24,000 Gallons Per Day (4.23 GP) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.17 Cap System   | Is there a current Performance Assurance Plan?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.18 Constructed Wetland                                    | Yes      No   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP 4.19 Sand-Lined Trench                                      |   |

**3. Design Flow and Septic Tank Sizing**

- A) Estimated Design Flow: \_\_\_\_\_ gallons per day       unknown
- B) Basis for design flow:
- Designated in permitting documents
  - Calculated or estimated based on (check all that apply):
    - Number of bedrooms for a dwelling: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Fixture count for a dwelling: \_\_\_\_\_
    - If not a dwelling: \_\_\_\_\_ gallons per day
- C) Evaluation of actual flow versus the design flow (determined in 1A):
- Actual flow did not appear to exceed design flow
  - Actual flow may exceed design flow
  - Unknown
- D) Inspector Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Septic Tank Inspection and Pumping**

- A) How many septic tanks are associated with this \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ water treatment facility?      1      2 or more
- B) Septic tank liquid level measured **before** pumping (measured in inches from the bottom of the tank)
- Primary (inlet) chamber: Scum thickness \_\_\_\_\_ inches, Sludge thickness \_\_\_\_\_ inches
  - Secondary (outlet) chamber: Scum thickness \_\_\_\_\_ inches, Sludge thickness \_\_\_\_\_ inches
  - Liquid level not determined
- C) Was each septic tank or other wastewater treatment container on the property pumped or otherwise serviced to remove, to the maximum extent possible, solid, floating, or liquid waste accumulations?      Yes      No
- If yes, what is the name of the septic hauler company? \_\_\_\_\_
- License number issued by ADEQ: \_\_\_\_\_
- If no, select one of the following reasons pumping was not performed:
- A Discharge Authorization for the on-site wastewater treatment facility was issued and the facility was put into service within 12 months before the transfer of ownership inspection,
  - Pumping or servicing was not necessary at the time of the inspection based on the manufacturer's written operation and maintenance instructions, or
  - No accumulation of floating or settled waste was present in the septic tank or wastewater treatment container.
- D) Indicate the date the inspection was performed. \_\_\_\_\_

E) The Capacity of the septic tank is \_\_\_\_\_ gallons, based on:  Measurement/dimensions of tank: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Volume Pumped  Estimate  Permit Document  
 Capacity not determined (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

F) Septic tank material:  
 Pre-cast concrete  Fiberglass  Plastic  Steel  Cast-in-place concrete  
 Other (Describe): \_\_\_\_\_

G) Access openings in septic tank: One Two Three Other (Describe): \_\_\_\_\_

H) Septic tank lids & risers: Present Not Present  
 If present, was the lid(s) securely fastened Yes No  
*Note: Risers aide on-going system maintenance - minimum 20" diameter*

I) Number of compartments in septic tank: One Two Other (Describe): \_\_\_\_\_

J) Was there evidence of a compromised tank (infiltration) or (exfiltration) of septic tank? Yes No

K) Was there evidence of a septic tank deficiency? (Check all applicable deficiencies observed. Describe extent and location in comment section)

- Root invasion  Exposed rebar
- Cracks in tank  Damaged inlet pipe
- Damaged lids or risers  Damaged outlet pipe
- Deteriorating concrete  Other concerns describe in inspector comments

L) Baffle/sanitary "T" material:  
 Pre-cast concrete  Fiberglass  Plastic  Clay  Could not be determined (explain in comments)

Condition of baffles and sanitary "Ts":

Inlet baffle or "T":  Present  Operational  Not operational  Not present  Not determined

Outlet baffle or "T":  Present  Operational  Not operational  Not present  Not determined

Interior baffle:  Present  Operational  Not operational  Not present  Not determined

M) Effluent filter (screen):  Present  Not Present  Serviced  Not serviced

Note: as of January 2001, effluent filters (screens) are required on all new septic tanks.

Routine work recommended to maintain the system (Some work may require a Construction Authorization from your local agency or ADEQ. Refer to A.A.C. R-18 A309 A.9 and b and local codes as applicable).

Inspector comments, including necessary routine work:

**4.1. Disposal Works**

Was the location of the disposal works determined?

Yes (see sketch on last page) No (explain why): \_\_\_\_\_

Disposal works please indicate type:

Trench  Bed  Chamber  Seepage pit  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Method of distribution

Diversion valve  Drop box  Distribution box  Manifold  Serial loading  
 Pressurized  Unknown

Was the distribution component inspected?    Yes    No  
 What type of material is the supply line made of:     PVC     Orangeburg     Tile     Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Were inspection ports present in disposal works?    Present    Not present

If inspection ports are present:  
 i)        Number of ports: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ii)        Indicate depth (in inches) of liquid in each port (point of reference would be grade):  
                  \_\_\_\_\_ Port 1    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 2    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 3    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 4  
                  \_\_\_\_\_ Port 5    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 6    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 7    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 8

CESSPOOL

Was an operational (hydraulic load) test performed on the disposal works?    Yes    No

Was there evidence of a disposal works deficiency?    Yes    No

(check all applicable deficiencies observed, describe as necessary in comment section).

- Crushed outlet pipe
- Root invasion
- High water lines in tank indicating previous backups
- D-box or valve not functioning properly
- Surfacing over disposal works or from inspection ports
- Unusually lush vegetation over disposal works
- Erosion over disposal works unusual settling
- Ponding water in the distribution media
- Animal intrusion
- Operational (water loading) test failure
- Could Not Determine

Were repairs or other maintenance recommended to disposal works as part of this inspection?    Yes    No

Inspector Comments:

Put your comments here. If possible, include photos and description and refer to notes located after page 7

I have inspected the physical and operational condition of the on-site wastewater treatment facility serving this property on the date indicated below. I have completed this Report of Inspection to the best of my knowledge, and have based the information contained in this form on observations and work performed at the time of inspection. However, this Report of Inspection does not imply nor guarantee any future performance of this facility in any way. By signing this form, I hereby verify that I have completed an ADEQ approved course and that I have personally witnessed and conducted the inspection of this property.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_



**5. Alternative System**

Alternative System should be evaluated by a qualified Inspector (A.A.C. R18-9 A316.B.1 through B.3) that possesses sufficient knowledge or has been trained by the product manufacturer to allow access to their systems without voiding the warranties.

Qualified Inspector: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_

Model/Capacity: \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternative System Information:**

Type of Treatment Equipment Present: \_\_\_\_\_

Aerator is working properly?      Yes      N/A      No (explain in comments)

System appears to have been properly maintained?      Yes      No (explain in comments)

**Pump Systems**      Yes      No

**Functionality:**

Is pump operating properly?      Yes      No

High Level Alarm Works?      Yes      No

Alarms and pumps on separate circuits?      Yes      No

Is pump wiring protected?      Yes      No

Both Audible and visual alarm present?      Yes      No

Pump Cycle operating as designed?      Yes      No

Is there a riser to grade with secure lid?      Yes      No

Is tank watertight and structurally sound?      Yes      No

Is there a Check Valve & Purge/Vent Hole      Yes      No

Inspectors comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**5.1. Alternative System Disposal Work**

Was the location of the disposal work determined?

Yes (see location of trench found on page \_\_\_\_\_)

No Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Disposal works please indicate type:

- Trench       Bed       Chamber       Seepage pit  
 Drip       Low Pressure Pipe

Method of distribution

- Diversion valve       Drop box       Distribution box       Manifold       Serial loading  
 Pressurized       Unknown       Other

If other than operational, (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

i) Was the distribution component inspected?

Yes, describe method used: \_\_\_\_\_

No (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Operational status of component:       Operational       Operational with concerns       Not Operational

Could not be determined (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

What type of material is the supply line made of:

- PVC       Orangeburg       Tile       Other \_\_\_\_\_



TAX PARCEL NO. \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF INSPECTION: \_\_\_\_\_

Initials of Inspector \_\_\_\_\_

Were inspection ports present in disposal works? Present Not present

If inspection ports are present:

- i) Number of ports: \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) Indicate depth (in inches) of liquid in each port (point of reference would be grade):  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Port 1    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 2    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 3    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 4  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Port 5    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 6    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 7    \_\_\_\_\_ Port 8

Was an operational (water loading) test performed on the disposal works? Yes No (Explain):

Was there evidence of a disposal works deficiency? Yes No

(check all applicable deficiencies observed, describe all in Comment section.)

- Crushed outlet pipe
- Root invasion
- High water lines in tank indicating previous backups
- D-box or valve not functioning properly
- Surfacing over disposal works (soil treatment area) or inspection ports
- Unusually lush vegetation over disposal works (soil treatment area)
- Erosion over disposal works (soil treatment area) or unusual seeping
- Ponding water in the distribution media
- Animal intrusion
- Operational (water loading) test failure
- Other problems (describe): \_\_\_\_\_
- Could not determine (Explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Were repairs or other maintenance done to disposal works as part of this inspection? Yes No

Physical and operational condition of the disposal works, at time of inspection, appeared to be:

Operational Operational with Concerns Not Operational

Note: some repairs may require Construction Authorization from your local agency or ADEQ.

Describe the problems found and other inspector comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I have inspected the physical and operational condition of the on-site wastewater treatment facility serving this property on the date indicated below. I have completed this Report of Inspection to the best of my knowledge, and have based the information contained in this form on observations and work performed at the time of inspection. However, this Report of Inspection does not imply nor guarantee any future performance of this facility in any way. By signing this form, I hereby verify that I have completed an ADEQ approved course and that I have personally witnessed and conducted the inspection of this property.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternative System Inspector:**

Organization Responsible for Completing Inspection: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**REQUIRED SKETCH OF ON-SITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY:**

For reproducible results, show dimensions from structures that will not change, such as corners of the house. Triangulation may be used. Include measurements from property lines. All labeling must be legible. Show details, such as the road and North arrow, in relation to building corners to get the correct orientation. Show all located components. **An acceptable As Built or Record Drawing can be substituted.**

**Be sure to include where on the property you found the cesspool. Many people do not recognize what a cesspool looks like.**

