



Republic of the Philippines

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

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**POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON SEWAGE TREATMENT AND SEWAGE  
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Memorandum Circular No. 2019-62

April 22, 2019

**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) is tasked to establish and prescribe rules, regulations and other issuances implementing laws on public order and safety, the general supervision over local government units (LGUs) and the promotion of local autonomy and community empowerment and monitor compliance thereof.
- 1.2 Similarly, under the program operations manual for the National Sewerage and Septage Management Program (NSSMP), the DILG is tasked to assist in the dissemination of information and capacity building of LGUs in the country concerning NSSMP as well as to facilitate LGU compliance.

**2.0 Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of issuing this policy is to reiterate, for emphasis, the roles of LGUs in the delivery of basic services relative to the implementation of sewage treatment and septage management system within their respective territorial jurisdiction.

**3.0 Legal Compliance**

- Section 20 of Republic Act No. 9275 or the Clean Water Act of 2004 provides that Local Government Units share the responsibility in the management and improvement of water quality within their territorial jurisdictions.
- Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code provides the following:

“Section 17. Basic Services and Facilities. –

(b) Such basic services and facilities include, but not limited to, the following:

(1) For Barangay:

(iii) Services and facilities related to general hygiene and sanitation, beautification, and solid waste collection;

(2) For a Municipality:

(viii) Infrastructure facilities intended primarily to service the needs of the residents of the municipality and which are funded out of municipal funds

including but not limited to, municipal roads and bridges; school buildings and other facilities for public elementary and secondary schools; clinics, health centers and other health facilities necessary to carry out health services; communal irrigation, small water impounding projects and other similar projects; fish ports; artesian wells, spring development, rainwater collectors and water supply systems; seawalls, dikes, drainage and sewerage, and flood control; traffic signals and road signs; and similar facilities;

(3) For a Province:

(vii) Infrastructure facilities intended to service the needs of the residence of the province and which are funded out of provincial funds including, but not limited to, provincial roads and bridges; inter-municipal waterworks, drainage and sewerage, flood control, and irrigation systems; reclamation projects; and similar facilities;

(4) For a City:

All the services and facilities of the municipality and province, \*\*\*.”

- Presidential Decree No. 856 or Code on Sanitation of the Philippines requires that all houses covered by the system shall be connected to the sewer in areas where a sewerage system is available.
- Presidential Decree No. 198 or Provincial Water Utilities Act of 1973 provides that water district may declare the further maintenance or use of cesspools, septic tanks, or other local means of sewerage disposal in such area to be a public nuisance.
- Republic Act No. 1378 or the Plumbing Engineering Act provides that the practice of plumbing shall embrace services in the form of consultations, designing, preparations of plans, specifications; estimates, erection, installation and supervision of plumbing work including the inspection and acceptance of materials used therein; extension and alteration of all pipings to fixtures, appliances, appurtenances in connection with any of the following: storm and sanitary drainage, facilities of buildings, the sanitary venting of fixtures, hot or cold water supply systems within or adjacent to any building, storm drains, sewerage system of any premises and/or in connection with any public disposal or any acceptable terminal.

#### 4.0 Scope/Coverage

- All DILG Regional Directors are directed to cause the immediate and widest dissemination of this Memorandum Circular to all concerned Local Government Units within their regions.

#### 5.0 Definition of Terms

For purposes of this Memorandum Circular, the following terms shall be defined as:

- a. **Accessible Septic Tanks** – refers to septic tanks capable of being reached, used or seen; with resealable opening (hole/pipe) for desludging;

- b. **BESWMC** – refers to Barangay Ecological Solid Waste Management Committee;
- c. **Combined Sewer System** – refers to the conveyance of sewage or wastewater from the drainage through the interceptor lines going to the Sewage Treatment Plants;
- d. **DENR** – refers to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources;
- e. **Desludging** – refers to the process of cleaning or removing the accumulated domestic septage from septic tanks;
- f. **DILG** – refers to the Department of the Interior and Local Government;
- g. **DOH** – refers to the Department of Health;
- h. **Drainage** – refers to the artificial pipes or conduits provided by the LGU for carrying flood water (no sewage nor wastewater shall pass through drainage systems);
- i. **Effluent** – refers to any wastewater, partially or completely treated or in its natural state, flowing out of a drainage canal, septic tank, building, manufacturing plant, industrial plant, treatment plant, etc.
- j. **Food Establishment** – refers to any structure used to engage in food business
- k. **EMB** – refers to the Environmental Management Bureau of the DENR;
- l. **Hygienic Septic Tank** – refers to a water-tight septic tank with no opening/s at the bottom slab so as not to allow the leaching of liquid or solid wastes to the surrounding soil or ground water;
- m. **Inorganic Waste** – refers to waste material such as sand, salt, iron, calcium, and other mineral materials that are only slightly affected by the action of organisms. Inorganic wastes are chemical substances of mineral origin; whereas organic wastes are chemical substances usually of animal or plant origin;
- n. **LLDA** – refers to the Laguna Lake Development Authority;
- o. **LWUA** – refers to the Local Water Utilities Administration;
- p. **MWSS** – refers to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (with the two (2) water concessionaire : Manila Water Company Inc. (MWCI) and Maynilad Water Services Inc. (MWSI));
- q. **Organic Waste** – refers to any waste coming from plants or animals sources. Commonly, they include food waste, fruit and vegetable peels, flower trimmings and even dog feces can be classified as organic waste. They are biodegradable (this means they are easily broken down by other organisms over time and turned into manure). Many people turn their organic waste into compost and use them in their gardens;

- r. **Pre-treatment Facility** – refers to any apparatus or equipment used to modify the characteristics of effluent prior to a wastewater disposal system, and includes grease traps, oil separators, dilution pits and similar devices.
- s. **Septage** – refers to a combination of scum, sludge, and liquid from household septic tanks, thickened and partially treated sewage that is removed from a septic tank;
- t. **Septage Treatment Plant** – refers to a series of structure purely for the process of treating septage in order to comply with DENR effluent standards;
- u. **Septage Management** – refers to the depository of the households sewage to a properly designed septic tank and collected by a desludging truck going to a Septage Treatment Plant (SpTP);
- v. **Septic Tank** – refers to a water-tight receptacle that receives the discharge of a sanitary plumbing system, or part thereof, and is designed and constructed to accomplish the sedimentation and digestion of the organic matter in the sewage within the period of detention or retention, and to allow the liquid to discharge to a leaching field, sewer lines, a combined sewerage network, or directly to a secondary wastewater treatment facility, in accordance with the standards set forth by the Revised National Plumbing Code of the Philippines;
- w. **Sewage** – refers to any wastewater containing human, animal, or vegetable waste matter in suspension or solution, including human excreta and urine, and may possibly contain liquids consisting of chemicals in solution;
- x. **Sewage Treatment Plant** – refers to a facility designed to receive the wastewater from domestic sources and to remove materials that damage water quality and threaten public health and safety when discharged into receiving streams or bodies of water;
- y. **Sewer or sewer lines** – refers to artificial pipes or conduits provided by the water utilities for carrying sewage and wastewater;
- z. **Sewerage Disposal System** – refers to the proper disposal of effluent using either a Sewerage System, Combined Drainage System, or Septage Management whichever is required or accepted by existing environmental laws and policies;
- aa. **Sewerage System** – refers to the system which involves the collection of sewage from households which will be conveyed through the sewer pipelines going to a Sewage Treatment Plant or STP.
- bb. **Sludge** – refers to the solid particle of domestic sewage which settles at the bottom of the sedimentation tank, and is digested by anaerobic bacteria purely from domestic sources;
- cc. **Wastewater** – refers to a pent or used water, discharged from homes, commercial establishments, farms, and industries;

- dd. **Wastewater Treatment Plant** – refers to the series of structure that processes the treatment of sewage, mostly from domestic origin, but may include pre-treated liquid wastes from industries and similar establishments, and may also accept the treatment of septage, provided there are facilities for accepting and pre-treating it; and
- ee. **Water Utilities** – refers to utilities which includes MWSS and its water concessionaires, local water district utilities, and other accredited water and wastewater services providers.

## **6.0 Policy Content and Guidelines**

### **6.1 Enactment of Sewage Treatment and Septage Management Ordinance (SSMO)**

- 6.1.1 All LGUs are advised to establish a sewerage and septage management system through the enactment of an ordinance.
  - 6.1.1.1 In the enactment of the same, the LGU may refer to **Annex A** of this MC for a sample SSMO.
- 6.1.2 All LGUs should take into consideration the giving of incentives to residential structure as well as to commercial and industrial establishments that complied to having facilities or systems that cater their wastewater.
- 6.1.3 All LGUs should take concrete actions in the implementation of programs and activities, enforcement of the law, and the giving of sanctions to erring owners and users of establishments and structures without proper sanitation facilities.
- 6.1.4 All LGUs are advised to formulate and maintain a robust database of the list of all homeowners with hygienic septic tanks, and database of all business establishments with adequate wastewater treatment facilities.
- 6.1.5 All LGUs are advised to assist the water utilities and other appropriate authorities (e.g. DPWH, PNP) in the enforcement of sewer connection, and penalties for non- or disconnection and illegal sewer tapping.
- 6.1.6 All LGUs are advised to exempt the water utilities desludging trucks from the existing or incoming truck ban proposal to ensure continuous desludging operations.

### **6.2 Local Government Units must ensure that all residential (including private subdivisions), commercial, industrial, institutional, and governmental establishments within its territorial jurisdiction have proper sewage treatment and septage management system**

- 6.2.1 All residential structures are encouraged to have hygienic septic tanks;
- 6.2.2 All commercial and industrial establishments, and hospitals are encouraged to have hygienic septic tanks or wastewater treatment facility based on the

determination of the DENR (or LLDA in the case of LGUs covered by the LLDA) and/or DOH;

- 6.2.3 All governmental and institutional structures are encouraged to have hygienic septic tanks or wastewater treatment facilities based on the number of individuals regularly occupying the structure. If there are 212 occupants or less, these structures must have a hygienic septic tank, otherwise, they are required to have a wastewater treatment facility;
- 6.2.4 Commercial, industrial, governmental, and institutional structures that are required to have wastewater treatment facilities shall have an operational wastewater treatment facility either on-site or by service off-site;
- 6.2.5 No wastewater shall be discharged to waterways without any proper treatment;
- 6.2.6 For sewerred areas, or areas with sewer pipelines, no wastewater other than those from residential structures shall be allowed to discharge on the sewers or sewer pipelines unless such wastewater was serviced by a pre-treatment facility to at least, be of domestic wastewater quality;
- 6.2.7 All food establishments (e.g. restaurants, eatery, food chains, etc.) discharging organic and inorganic wastes *are encouraged* to have a working and properly maintained oil and grease trap installed in their respective kitchen areas; and
- 6.2.8 All septic tanks must be accessible at all times.
  - 6.2.8.1 Residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and governmental structures with inaccessible and/or non-compliant septic tank shall opt for any of the following: (a) remodelling or restructuring to make the septic tank accessible and compliant with national standards, within reasonable time; or (b) connection to existing sewer lines of water utilities, as applicable; or (c) construction of communal or shared septic tank.
  - 6.2.8.2 No building permit shall be issued for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and governmental structures unless the design of the hygienic septic tank or wastewater treatment facility in the building plan conforms with existing environmental laws and policies *i.e.* Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, Code on Sanitation of the Philippines.
  - 6.2.8.3 No business owner shall be issued new business permit unless he/she has obtained the necessary clearances and permits such as discharge permits and environmental sanitation clearances as may be prescribed by existing laws or as may be required by the DENR, LLDA, and/or DOH and its instrumentalities.

### **6.3 Design of Septic Tanks**

- 6.3.1 All septic tanks shall be designed to have at least two chambers and the house plumbing lay out must exclude storm water or flow from downspouts, and such other requirements and specifications as provided by national standards.<sup>1</sup>

### **6.4 Mandatory Desludging of Septic Tanks**

- 6.4.1 All owners and users of septic tanks shall be required to desludge at least once every five (5) years or if the septic tank is fully filled with sludge.
  - 6.4.1.1 Untreated excreta from residential areas without septic tanks and untreated wastewater from commercial, industrial, institutional and public establishments shall not be allowed to be discharged to open drainage canals or piped drainage systems.
- 6.4.2 The opening and closing of septic tanks, for desludging purposes, shall only be done with the authority of the owner or user and with the assistance of a personnel in the Barangay/Homeowners Association.
- 6.4.3 Actual desludging must be done only by the water utility or a private desludging company duly accredited by the DOH and/or DENR-EMB.
  - 6.4.3.1 Only DENR and/or DOH accredited private entities complete with permits shall be allowed to provide septage collection and transport services. Collected septage shall only be disposed and treated in a DENR and/or DOH accredited disposal/treatment facility with pertinent permits.
  - 6.4.3.2 Liquid and/or solid materials removed from septic tanks shall be transported only by a DOH/DENR accredited septage hauler/pumper to the approved septage treatment facility pursuant to the regulations prescribed by the DOH. Unless, otherwise provided by law, no septage hauler/pumper shall be allowed to collect, transport and upload or dispose septage in other places, including bodies of water, agricultural fields and the drainage system within the City/Municipality.
  - 6.4.3.3 All entities engaged in desludging activities are required to secure Permit to Transport from the DENR, Environmental Sanitation Clearance from the DOH, sanitary Permit from the City/Municipal Health Department, and other pertinent permits as may be deemed necessary as part of the requirements for issuance of annual business permit from the City/Municipality.

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<sup>1</sup> Hygienic septic tank design provided in the SSMO (Annex B) was taken from the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission.

**6.5 Barangay officials or the designated member of their respective BESWMCs are advised to accompany and give assistance to the water utility or private desludging company in the conduct of desludging activities within their territory.**

- 6.5.1 Assistance should be in the form of, but not limited to, IEC, house to house census/campaign, opening and closing of septic tanks manhole cover, if needed, traffic flow regulation.
- 6.5.2 Barangay officials should also set availment rate target to ensure the success of the desludging program”.
- 6.5.3 Each barangay is required to maintain a registry of households that availed and did not avail of desludging services.

**6.6 Sewer Line Connection/ Sewerage Projects**

- 6.6.1 The LGU shall provide assistance in securing necessary permits, right of way, Information Education Communication (IEC), and land acquisition to the water utilities in laying down sewer lines within their territorial jurisdiction.
- 6.6.2 Only domestic wastewater sources shall connect to existing sewer lines.
- 6.6.3 House plumbing lay out must exclude storm water or flow from downspouts, and such other requirements and specifications as provided by national standards.
- 6.6.4 Industrial, governmental, institutional, commercial buildings and structures are required to pre-treat all wastewater from their structures to “domestic wastewater quality” in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 (RA 9275) and to the DAO 2016-08 “Water Quality Guidelines and General Effluent Standards of 2016”, before the same is discharged.
- 6.6.5 Said connection to existing sewer lines shall be subject to sewerage service charges/fees (if any) in accordance with existing laws, rules, or regulations as identified by the water utilities.

**6.7 The following are prohibited acts:**

- 6.7.1 Failure of LGUs to enact SSMO;
- 6.7.2 Failure of commercial establishments to comply with the requirement of taking adequate wastewater facilities;
- 6.7.3 Refusal to desludge as required by this Memorandum Circular;
- 6.7.4 Refusal of new and existing residential customers to connect to available sewer lines. Commercial, industrial, governmental, and institutional



structures/establishments have the option to construct their own full wastewater treatment facility as required by DENR or LLDA or to connect to existing available sewer line subject to the pre-treatment requirement of the sewerage service provider;

- 6.7.5 Dumping of septage and untreated wastewater to drainages, canals, rivers, and other natural and artificial waterways and other open areas;
- 6.7.6 Desludging and transporting of septage without the necessary permits and accreditation from the authorized permitting agencies; and
- 6.7.7 Hiring/availing the services of illegal/non-accredited deslugger, transporter by any person or establishment to desludge septic tanks or dispose of their wastewater.
- 6.7.8 Those acts prohibited under Section 27 of Republic Act No. 9275 (Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004).
- 6.7.9 Failure to comply with Section 79 (a) and (b) of Presidential Decree No. 856 (Code on Sanitation of the Philippines).

## **7 Penal Provisions**

- 7.1 All local officials and/or employees who fail to implement the provisions of this MC may be held administratively liable.
- 7.2 In the exercise of their supervisory powers, the governors and mayors should commence disciplinary actions against local officials who fail to carry out the mandate of the law and their responsibilities.

## **8 References**

- 8.1 Republic Act No. 9275 (Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004)
- 8.2 Republic Act No. 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991)
- 8.3 Republic Act No. 1378 (Plumbing Law)
- 8.4 Presidential Decree No. 856 (Code on Sanitation of the Philippines)
- 8.5 PD 1152, Sec. 50 of Chapter III – Methods of Liquid Waste Disposal in relation to Sec. 11 - Prohibitions of DAO 2016-08
- 8.6 Sec. 4 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Domestic Wastewater Disposal of 1981 in relation to Sec. 11 – Prohibitions of DAO 2016-08
- 8.7 Sec. 5 (v) of RA 1378 (Plumbing Law) in relation to Sec. 11 – Prohibitions of DAO 2016-08
- 8.8 Section 74 paragraph D, Chapter XVII – Sewage Collection and Disposal, Excreta Disposal and Drainage of PD 856 (Code on Sanitation of the Philippines)

## **9 Effectivity**


This Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately.

## **10 Repealing Clause**

All DILG orders and other issuances inconsistent herewith are hereby superseded, repealed and/or modified accordingly.

**11 Approving Authority**

  
**EDUARDO M. AÑO**  
Secretary 

   
DILG-OBEC 11052018-05142

**12 Feedback**

For related queries, kindly contact the Department of Interior and Local Government – Bureau of Local Government Supervision at Tel Nos. (02) 876-3454 loc. 4211 or at email address at [blgspcmd@yahoo.com](mailto:blgspcmd@yahoo.com).

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