



Republic of the Philippines

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON SEWAGE TREATMENT AND SEPTAGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Memorandum Circular No. _____

1.0 Background

The Department of the Interior and Local Government is tasked to establish and prescribe rules, regulations and other issuances implementing laws on public order and safety, the general supervision over local governments and the promotion of local autonomy and community empowerment and monitor compliance thereof.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to lay down the roles of local government units relative to the implementation of sewage treatment and septage management system within its territorial jurisdiction.

3.0 Legal Compliance

- 3.1. Section 20 of Republic Act No. 9275 or the Clean Water Act of 2004 entails that Local Government Units shall share the responsibility in the management and improvement of water quality within their territorial jurisdictions.
- 3.2. Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code provides that barangay are required to deliver basic services which include but limited to services and facilities related to general hygiene and sanitation, beautification, and solid waste collection.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. 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.

4.0 Scope/Coverage

- 4.1. All DILG Regional Directors are directed to cause the immediate and widest dissemination of this Memorandum Circular within their jurisdictions.

5.0 Definition of Terms

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

- a. **Accessible** - capable of being reached, used or seen;
- b. **Combined Sewer System** – this is the conveyance of sewage or wastewater from the drainage through the interceptor lines going to the Sewage Treatment Plants;
- c. **DENR** – the Department of Environment and Natural Resources;
- d. **Desludging** – a process of cleaning or removing the accumulated domestic septage from septic tanks;
- e. **DILG** – the Department of the Interior and Local Government;
- f. **DOH** – the Department of Health;
- g. **Drainage** - artificial pipes or conduits provided by the LGU for carrying flood water (no sewage nor wastewater shall pass through drainage systems);
- h. **Effluent** – a general term denoting 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.
- i. **Food Establishment** – any structure used to engaged in food business
- j. **EMB** – the Environmental Management Bureau of the DENR;
- k. **Hygienic Septic Tank** – 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;
- l. **Inorganic Waste** - 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;
- m. **LLDA** – the Laguna Lake Development Authority;
- n. **LWUA** - Local Water Utilities Administration;

- o. **MWSS** – the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (with the two (2) water concessionaire : Manila Water Company Inc. (MWCI) and Maynilad Water Services Inc. (MWSI);
- p. **Organic Waste** - comes from plants or animals sources. Commonly, they include food waste, fruit and vegetable peels, flower trimmings and even dog poop 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;
- q. **Pre-treatment Facility** - means 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.
- r. **Septage** – a combination of scum, sludge, and liquid from household septic tanks, thickened and partially treated sewage that is removed from a septic tank;
- s. **Septage Treatment Plant** – a series of structure purely for the process of treating septage in order to comply with DENR effluent standards;
- t. **Septage Management** –this involves 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);
- u. **Septic Tank** – 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;
- v. **Sewage** – 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;
- w. **Sewage Treatment Plant** - 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;
- x. **Sewer or sewer lines** – artificial pipes or conduits provided by the water utilities for carrying sewage and wastewater;

- y. **Sewerage Disposal System** – is 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;
- z. **Sewerage System** – this involves the collection of sewage from households which will be conveyed through the sewer pipelines going to a Sewage treatment Plant or STP.
- aa. **Sludge** – a solid particle of domestic sewage which settles at the bottom of the sedimentation tank, and is digested by anaerobic bacteria purely from domestic sources;
- bb. **Wastewater** - Spent or used water, discharged from homes, commercial establishments, farms, and industries;
- cc. **Wastewater Treatment Plant** – a 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
- dd. **Water Utilities** – this include 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. LGUs must cause the immediate enactment of an ordinance establishing a sewerage and septage management system within their respective local government units.
 - 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. LGUs should take into consideration the giving of fines and penalties to residential structure and the non-renewal of business permits of commercial and industrial establishments that fail to comply with having adequate facilities or systems to cater to their wastewater.
- 6.1.3. 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. LGUs should 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. Assist the water utilities and other appropriate authorities in the enforcement of sewer connection, and penalties for non- or disconnection and illegal sewer tapping.
- 6.1.6. 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 shall have hygienic septic tanks;
- 6.2.2. All commercial and industrial establishments, and hospitals shall 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 shall 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 should 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 shall be required 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.
- 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 maybe 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.

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 Brgy. Officials/ Homeowners.
- 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 of 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.

6.5. Barangay officials or their designated personnel are directed 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. Also, Barangay officials should 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 who availed and who did not 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. Refusal to desludge as required by this Memorandum Circular;
- 6.7.2. 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;
- 6.7.3. Dumping of septage and untreated wastewater to drainages, canals, rivers, and other natural and artificial waterways and other open areas;
- 6.7.4. Desludging and transporting of septage without the necessary permits and accreditation from the authorized permitting agencies; and
- 6.7.5. Hiring/availing the services of illegal/non-accredited desludger, transporter by any person or establishment to desludge septic tanks or dispose of their wastewater.

7.0 Penal Provisions

- 7.1. All Local Officials and employees who fail to implement the provisions of this MC shall be subjected to administrative penalties.
- 7.2. In the exercise of their supervisory powers, the governors and mayors should commence disciplinary actions against local officials who fails to carry out the mandate of the law and their responsibilities.

8.0 References

- 8.1. Republic Act No. 9275
8.2. Republic Act No. 7160
8.3. Presidential Decree No. 856

9.0 Effectivity

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately.

10.0 Repealing Clause

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

11.0 Approving Authority

EDUARDO M. AÑO
Officer-In-Charge

12.0 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.