Accessory Dwelling Unit Drinking Water and Wastewater System Fact Sheet

If you are considering constructing an attached or detached accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) on your property, you need to be aware of Vermont's rules regarding drinking water supplies and wastewater (septic) systems (WW Rules). ADU's are not defined in the Vermont WW Rules, but the qualify as living units which are covered in the WW Rules. You and your lessees want reliable water and wastewater systems — contaminated drinking water, sewage backups in living units, or surfacing sewage on your property can impact human health and the are not a recipe for good tenant and/or or neighbor relations!

Examples of Accessory Dwelling Units

Examples of ADUs include: Over-the-Garage Apartments; In-law Apartments; Basement Apartments; Non-mobile, Non-registered RVs; Yurts/Yomes; Cabins/Huts; Mobile Homes; Single Family Residences; Accessory Apartments; Duplexes; Multi-unit Buildings; Condominiums; Tiny homes; & Cottages all on the same property lot as another (primary) dwelling unit.

Do I Need a Wastewater Permit?

VT WW Rules (https://bit.ly/vtwwrules) require all structures for living or work have a water supply and wastewater system that protects human health and the environment. With the exception of some exemptions, changes in use that impact the wastewater output and water usage need an updated permit, for example: adding an apartment above the garage; or converting a bedroom to a studio apartment.

If I already Have a Wastewater System and Drinking Water Supply for My Property, Why Can't I Just Use It for My ADU?

Water supply/wastewater systems can't handle an unlimited number of people, particularly when it creates a separate household. Adding on new ADUs to a system not designed for them can lead to expensive failures of both the water supply and wastewater systems, creating human and environmental hazards.

What Is an Accessory Dwelling Unit?

An ADU is a space that has at least one bedroom, one bathroom, and one kitchen. A bedroom is a room or space in a building that is used or serves as sleeping quarters/spaces. A kitchen is a space with a sink designated for the cooking of food. Adding an ADU to your property is considered an increase in wastewater/ water flows and requires a permit.

Drinking Water and Wastewater Have Limits

Drinking water and wastewater systems are engineered for certain amounts of water and sewage per day. Both town sewer/water and onsite wastewater/private wells have limits on the amount of water and sewage they can handle. Not having a proper wastewater and water supply system can negatively impact human and environmental health by spreading dangerous germs or releasing untreated wastewater.

I Only Want to Short-Term Rent my ADU or Just Use It When Family is Visiting, Do I Still Need a Permit?

A WW Permit is still required. Please see our Short-Term Rental Fact Sheet for details or contact a VT Licensed Designer.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What if my ADU has a composting toilet, doesn't that take care of their wastewater needs?
No, you must safely dispose of all types of wastewater, not just toilet water. The use of a composting toilet is allowed with a permit and allows for a 25% reduction in the size of your leachfield.

What if I provide an outdoor pump well/bottled water/portable tank of water/rain water collection system for my ADU, does that take care of my potable water needs? No, a sufficient quantity of water for guests for personal hygiene and proper sanitation is required. The State of Vermont requires that water to be piped directly to the unit for dependable sanitation purposes. Different standards exist for remote sites, please contact us with questions.

How do I get a WW Permit? Contact a State of Vermont licensed wastewater and water supply designer. They can help you understand requirements and assist you in applying for a permit. Go to this link to find a nearby professional: **https://bit.ly/vtlicenseddesigner**.

I plan to convert a bedroom to create an ADU, do I need a WW Permit? Most likely yes, however, some exemptions may apply. Please contact a VT Licensed Designer or your Regional Engineer to determine the specifics of your situation.

This fact sheet is not a replacement for professional advice. If you have questions, please contact the Department of Environmental Conservation Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division's Regional Office Program. Need to know your Regional Office? Go to this website https://dec.vermont.gov/water/ww-systems#romap or call (802)-828-1535 for assistance.

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