Guidance For Common Waterless Toilets

This Guidance is provided for those interested in the use of Waterless Toilets to manage human waste without water carried (flush) toilets, and in what instances it can and cannot be used in Vermont. Please be aware that waterless toilets do not preclude the need for sufficient potable water supply for human hygiene including but not limited to drinking, cooking, and washing) and sanitary disposal of wastewater.

Outhouse

A seat above hole in the ground, with or without a building or structure around it. Outhouses leach untreated waste and liquids into the environment. Nutrients and harmful pathogens can enter groundwater. **Not allowed for new use in Vermont.**

Incineration Toilet

Toilet that burns solid waste and liquids. Allowed with a permit. Can reduce leachfield size by 25%. Ash residue must be disposed of at a landfill or a permitted location on the property that meets leach field requirements. The number of incinerating toilets required should be based on the number of users and frequency of use.

Portable Toilet

A temporary structure delivered to a site containing one or more toilets and one or more tanks with no discharge. Allowed on construction sites and events lasting less than 28 days without a permit. A permit requiring the use of permanent toilet facilities is required for campsites being used more than 12 nights per year.

Vault Privy

A seat above an underground tank that can be regularly pumped. Leaches no liquid to surrounding soil. Allowed at campsites/campgrounds or remote huts with a permit. Vault privy design and maintenance information developed by the US Forest Services is available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/t-d/pubs/pdfimage/91231601.pdf (In-Depth Design and Maintenance Manual for Vault Toilets. 1991)

Moldering Privy

A raised toilet that uses a slow composting process. Must be permitted and located at a site that meets all leachfield requirements. Composted material must be disposed of at a landfill or permitted site on property. Guidelines for Moldering Privies are contained in the 2nd Edition of the Backcountry Sanitation Manual, published by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and others (https://appalachiantrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/backcountry-sanitation-manual-2-0-august-2014.pdf).

Composting Toilet

Allowed with a valid permit. Composting toilets can also reduce the leach field size by 25%. The toilet should be NSF-41 certified or equivalent and properly sized for the intended number of users and the frequency and duration of use. Compost must be disposed of at a landfill or a permitted site on property. At a primitive campsite, it can be used without a permit if waste is disposed of at a landfill.

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 http://dec.vermont.gov/water/ww-systems#romap or call (802)-828-1535 for assistance.

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