



INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE SEWAGE DISPOSAL CODE®

A Member of the International Code Family®

2012 IPSDC®

2012 International Private Sewage Disposal Code®

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PREFACE

Introduction

Internationally, code officials recognize the need for a modern, up-to-date code addressing the safe and sanitary installation of individual sewage disposal systems. The *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*®, in this 2012 edition, is designed to meet these needs through model code regulations that safeguard the public health and safety in all communities, large and small.

This comprehensive sewage disposal code establishes minimum regulations for sewage disposal systems using prescriptive and performance-related provisions. It is founded on broad-based principles that make possible the use of new materials and new sewage disposal designs. This 2012 edition is fully compatible with all of the *International Codes*® (I-Codes®) published by the International Code Council (ICC)®, including the *International Building Code*®, *International Energy Conservation Code*®, *International Existing Building Code*®, *International Fire Code*®, *International Fuel Gas Code*®, *International Green Construction Code*™ (to be available March 2012), *International Mechanical Code*®, *ICC Performance Code*®, *International Plumbing Code*®, *International Property Maintenance Code*®, *International Residential Code*®, *International Swimming Pool and Spa Code*™ (to be available March 2012), *International Wildland-Urban Interface Code*® and *International Zoning Code*®.

The *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* provisions provide many benefits, among which is the model code development process that offers an international forum for plumbing professionals to discuss performance and prescriptive code requirements. This forum provides an excellent arena to debate proposed revisions. This model code also encourages international consistency in the application of provisions.

Development

The first edition of the *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* (1995) was the culmination of an effort initiated in 1994 by a development committee appointed by the ICC and consisting of representatives of the three statutory members of the International Code Council at that time, including: Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI). The intent was to draft a comprehensive set of regulations for sewage disposal systems consistent with and inclusive of the scope of the existing model codes. Technical content of the latest model codes promulgated by BOCA, ICBO and SBCCI was used as the basis for the development. This 2012 edition presents the code as originally issued, with changes reflected in the 1997 through 2009 editions and further changes approved through the ICC Code Development Process through 2010. A new edition such as this is promulgated every three years.

This code is founded on principles intended to establish provisions consistent with the scope of a sewage disposal code that adequately protects public health, safety and welfare; provisions that do not unnecessarily increase construction costs; provisions that do not restrict the use of new materials, products or methods of construction; and provisions that do not give preferential treatment to particular types or classes of materials, products or methods of construction.

Adoption

The *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* is available for adoption and use by jurisdictions internationally. Its use within a governmental jurisdiction is intended to be accomplished through adoption by reference in accordance with proceedings establishing the jurisdiction's laws. At the time of adoption, jurisdictions should insert the appropriate information in provisions requiring specific local information, such as the name of the adopting jurisdiction. These locations are shown in bracketed words in small capital letters in the code and in the sample ordinance. The sample adoption ordinance on page xi addresses several key elements of a code adoption ordinance, including the information required for insertion into the code text.

Maintenance

The *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* is kept up to date through the review of proposed changes submitted by code enforcing officials, industry representatives, design professionals and other interested parties. Proposed changes are carefully considered through an open code development process in which all interested and affected parties may participate.

The contents of this work are subject to change both through the Code Development Cycles and the governmental body that enacts the code into law. For more information regarding the code development process, contact the Codes and Standards Development Department of the International Code Council.

While the development procedure of the *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* assures the highest degree of care, ICC, its members and those participating in the development of this code do not accept any liability resulting from compliance or noncompliance with the provisions because ICC and its founding members do not have the power or authority to police or enforce compliance with the contents of this code. Only the governmental body that enacts the code into law has such authority.

Code Development Committee Responsibilities (Letter Designations in Front of Section Numbers)

In each code development cycle, proposed changes to this code are considered at the Code Development Hearing by the International Plumbing Code Development Committee, whose action constitutes a recommendation to the voting membership for final action on the proposed change. Proposed changes to a code section that has a number beginning with a letter in brackets are considered by a different code development committee. For example, proposed changes to code sections that have [B] in front of them (e.g., [B] 309.2) are considered by one of the International Building Code Development Committees (IBC-General) at the Code Development Hearings.

The content of sections in this code that begin with a letter designation is maintained by another code development committee in accordance with the following:

- [A] = Administrative Code Development Committee;
- [B] = International Building Code Development Committee (IBC-Fire Safety, General, Means of Egress or Structural); and
- [P] = International Plumbing Code Development Committee.

Note that, for the development of the 2015 edition of the I-Codes, there will be two groups of code development committees and they will meet in separate years. The groupings are as follows:

Group A Codes (Heard in 2012, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 3, 2012)	Group B Codes (Heard in 2013, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 3, 2013)
International Building Code	Administrative Provisions (Chapter 1 all codes except IRC and ICC PC, administrative updates to currently referenced standards, and designated definitions)
International Fuel Gas Code	International Energy Conservation Code
International Mechanical Code	International Existing Building Code
International Plumbing Code	International Fire Code
International Private Sewage Disposal Code	International Green Construction Code
	ICC Performance Code
	International Property Maintenance Code
	International Residential Code
	International Swimming Pool and Spa Code
	International Wildland-Urban Interface Code
	International Zoning Code

Code change proposals submitted for code sections that have a letter designation in front of them will be heard by the respective committee responsible for such code sections. Because different committees will hold its code development hearings in different years, it is possible that some proposals for this code will be heard by a committee in a different year than the year in which the primary committee for this code meets.

For instance, every section of Chapter 1 of this code is designated as the responsibility of the Administrative Code Development Committee, and that committee is part of the Group B portion of the hearings. This committee will hold its code development hearings in 2013 to consider all code change proposals for Chapter 1 of this code and proposals for Chapter 1 of all I-Codes except the *International Residential Code* and *ICC Performance Code*. Therefore, any proposals received for Chapter 1 of this code will be assigned to the Administrative Code Development Committee for consideration in 2013.

It is very important that anyone submitting code change proposals understand which code development committee is responsible for the section of the code that is the subject of the code change proposal. For further information on the code development committee responsibilities, please visit the ICC web site at www.iccsafe.org/scoping.

Marginal Markings

Solid vertical lines in the margins within the body of the code indicate a technical change from the requirements of the 2009 edition. Deletion indicators in the form of an arrow (➡) are provided in the margin where an entire section, paragraph, exception or table has been deleted or an item in a table or list of items has been deleted.

A single asterisk [*] placed in the margin indicates that text or a table has been relocated within the code. A double asterisk **[**] placed in the margin indicates that the text or table immediately following it has been relocated there from elsewhere in the code. The following table indicates such relocations in the 2012 *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*.

2012 LOCATION	2009 LOCATION
304.1 through 304.6	105.4 through 105.4.6

Italicized Terms

Selected terms set forth in Chapter 2, Definitions, are italicized where they appear in code text. Such terms are not italicized where the definition set forth in Chapter 2 does not impart the intended meaning in the use of the term. The terms selected have definitions which the user should read carefully to facilitate better understanding of the code.

EFFECTIVE USE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE SEWAGE DISPOSAL CODE

The *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* (IPSDC) is a model code that regulates minimum requirements for the installation of new or the alteration of existing private sewage disposal systems. Where a building cannot be served by a public sewer system, the building site must be provided with a system for treating the waste water generated from the use of plumbing fixtures in the building. The IPSDC addresses site evaluations, materials, various soil absorption systems, holding tanks, cesspools and onsite waste water treatment systems. The IPSDC provides a total approach for the onsite, safe disposal of the waste flow discharged to the plumbing fixtures in a building.

The IPSDC is a specification- (prescriptive-) oriented code with very few occurrences of performance-oriented text. The site soil must be evaluated in a prescribed manner to determine its ability to accept the waste flow. The chosen waste treatment method must be designed in a prescribed manner for the soil conditions at the building site, constructed using prescribed materials and installed according to prescribed dimensions. The IPSDC sets forth the minimum acceptable requirements for private sewage disposal systems in order to protect humans and the environment from insanitary conditions that would develop if waste flows were not rendered harmless.

Arrangement and Format of the 2009 IPSDC

The format of the IPSDC allows each chapter to be devoted to a particular subject with the exception of Chapter 3 which contains general subject matters that are not extensive enough to warrant their own independent chapter. The IPSDC is divided into 11 different parts:

Chapters	Subjects
1-2	Administration and Definitions
3	General Regulations
4	Site Evaluation and Requirements
5	Materials
6, 7, 9 &10	Effluent Absorption and Distribution Systems
8	Tanks
11	Waste Water Treatment Systems
12	Inspections
13	Nonliquid Saturated Treatment Systems
14	Referenced Standards
Appendices A & B	Appendices

The following is a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of the scope and intent of the provisions of the *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*:

Chapter 1 Scope and Administration. This chapter contains provisions for the application, enforcement and administration of subsequent requirements of the code. In addition to establishing the scope of the code, Chapter 1 identifies which buildings and structures come under its purview. Chapter 1 is largely concerned with maintaining “due process of law” in enforcing the requirements contained in the body of this code. Only through careful observation of the administrative provisions can the building official reasonably expect to demonstrate that “equal protection under the law” has been provided.

Chapter 2 Definitions. Chapter 2 is the repository of the definitions of terms used in the body of the code. Codes are technical documents and every word, term and punctuation mark can impact the meaning of the code text and the intended results. The code often uses terms that have a unique meaning in the code and the code meaning can differ substantially from the ordinarily understood meaning of the term as used outside of the code.

The terms defined in Chapter 2 are deemed to be of prime importance in establishing the meaning and intent of the code text. The user of the code should be familiar with and consult this chapter because the definitions are essential to the correct interpretation of the code and the user may not be aware that a term is defined.

Where understanding of a term's definition is especially key to or necessary for understanding of a particular code provision, the term is shown in *italics* wherever it appears in the code. This is true only for those terms that have a meaning that is unique to the code. In other words, the generally understood meaning of a term or phrase might not be sufficient or consistent with the meaning prescribed by the code; therefore, it is essential that the code-defined meaning be known.

Guidance regarding tense, gender and plurality of defined terms, as well as guidance regarding terms not defined in this code, is provided.

Chapter 3 General Regulations. The content of Chapter 3 is often referred to as “miscellaneous,” rather than general regulations. Chapter 3 received that label because it is the only chapter in the code whose requirements do not interrelate. If a requirement cannot be located in another chapter, it can be found in this chapter. Specific requirements concerning flood hazard areas are in this chapter.

Chapter 4 Site Evaluation and Requirements. A private sewage disposal system has an effluent which cannot be directly discharged into waterways or open ponds. Soil of the right consistency and water content provides a natural filtering and treatment of this discharge. Because soil conditions vary widely, even on the same building site, tests and inspections of the soils must be performed to evaluate the degree to which the soil can accept these liquids. The results of the tests provide necessary information to design an adequate private sewage disposal system. Chapter 4 provides the methods for evaluating the building site.

Chapter 5 Materials. Private sewage disposal systems depend on the strength, quality and chemical resistance of the components that make up the system. To that end, the purpose of Chapter 5 is to specify the minimum material and component standards to ensure that the private sewage disposal system will correctly perform for its intended life.

Chapter 6 Soil Absorption Systems. The design of soil absorption systems depends heavily on the result of the tests and evaluation of the site soil conditions required in Chapter 4. Where soil is less permeable, the area of the soil absorption must be large as compared to that required for soils that are highly permeable. The type of building that is being served by the private sewage disposal system also affects the size of the planned soil absorption area. This chapter provides the methods for computing the required absorption area and details for the proper installation of the soil absorption systems.

Chapter 7 Pressure Distribution Systems. Chapter 6 deals with gravity-type soil absorption systems or systems where the effluent is allowed to drain out of the distribution piping by gravity. This chapter offers an alternative method of discharging the effluent into the ground by pressure means. As such, Chapter 7 provides the necessary details for designing the piping and pumping systems for pressure distribution systems.

Chapter 8 Tanks. Tanks are an integral part of any private sewage disposal system whether they serve as treatment (septic) tanks or merely just holding tanks for leveling the peaks in flow to the system. Where tanks are used for treatment, the dimensions, volume and location of internal features are very important to ensure that the solid wastes are kept within the tank so as to not clog the effluent distribution system. Where tanks are used for holding purposes, they must be sized large enough to accommodate the total of peak flows coming from a building. Chapter 8 provides the necessary requirements for tanks.

Chapter 9 Mound Systems. Mound systems are another method for applying the effluent from a private sewage disposal system to the soil. This type of system may be advantageous in some localities due to the existing soil conditions. Chapter 9 has specific requirements for soil and site evaluations for mound systems.

Chapter 10 Cesspools. Although prohibited from being installed as a permanent private sewage disposal system, cesspools may be necessary where permanent systems are under repair, or are being built. Chapter 10 provides the details for constructing a cesspool.

Chapter 11 Residential Waste Water Systems. Another method of private sewage disposal is a small waste water treatment plant. Where permitted, these systems can discharge effluent directly to streams and rivers. Chapter 11 specifies the standard to which waste water treatment plants must conform.

Chapter 12 Inspections. The best soil and site analysis along with the best design will be rendered useless if the system is not installed according to the plans for the system. Chapter 12 provides requirements for inspection of private sewage disposal systems.

Chapter 13 Nonliquid Saturated Treatment Systems. In some locations, water for the flushing of wastes into and through a sanitary piping system is not available. For example, a toilet facility provided for a remote campground without running water would require such a system. Chapter 13 specifies the standard to which nonliquid saturated treatment systems must conform.

Chapter 14 Referenced Standards. The code contains numerous references to standards that are used to regulate materials and methods of construction. Chapter 14 contains a comprehensive list of all standards that are referenced in the code. The standards are part of the code to the extent of the reference to the standard. Compliance with the referenced standard is necessary for compliance with this code. By providing specifically adopted standards, the construction and installation requirements necessary for compliance with the code can be readily determined. The basis for code compliance is, therefore, established and available on an equal basis to the code official, contractor, designer and owner.

Chapter 14 is organized in a manner that makes it easy to locate specific standards. It lists all of the referenced standards, alphabetically, by acronym of the promulgating agency of the standard. Each agency's standards are then listed in either alphabetical or numeric order based upon the standard identification. The list also contains the title of the standard; the edition (date) of the standard referenced; any addenda included as part of the ICC adoption; and the section or sections of this code that reference the standard.

Appendix A System Layout Illustrations. Because each chapter of this code uses only words to describe requirements, illustrations can offer greater insight as to what the words mean. Appendix A has a number of illustrations referenced to specific sections of the code to help the reader gain a better understanding of the code's requirements.

Appendix B Tables for Pressure Distribution Systems. The design of a pressure distribution system is accomplished by the use of several complex formulas found in Chapter 7. Because a user of the code may not have the necessary experience to manipulate the formulas, a tabular approach for designing pressure distribution systems is provided in Appendix B.

LEGISLATION

The *International Codes* are designed and promulgated to be adopted by reference by legislative action. Jurisdictions wishing to adopt the 2012 *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* as an enforceable regulation governing individual sewage disposal systems should ensure that certain factual information is included in the adopting legislation at the time adoption is being considered by the appropriate governmental body. The following sample adoption legislation addresses several key elements, including the information required for insertion into the code text.

SAMPLE LEGISLATION FOR ADOPTION OF THE *INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE SEWAGE DISPOSAL CODE* ORDINANCE NO. _____

A[N] [ORDINANCE/STATUTE/REGULATION] of the [JURISDICTION] adopting the 2012 edition of the *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*, regulating and governing the design, construction, quality of materials, erection, installation, alteration, repair, location, relocation, replacement, addition to, use or maintenance of individual sewage disposal systems in the [JURISDICTION]; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefor; repealing [ORDINANCE/STATUTE/REGULATION] No. _____ of the [JURISDICTION] and all other ordinances or parts of laws in conflict therewith.

The [GOVERNING BODY] of the [JURISDICTION] does ordain as follows:

Section 1. That a certain document, three (3) copies of which are on file in the office of the [TITLE OF JURISDICTION'S KEEPER OF RECORDS] of [NAME OF JURISDICTION], being marked and designated as the *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*, 2012 edition, including Appendix Chapters [FILL IN THE APPENDIX CHAPTERS BEING ADOPTED] (see *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* Section 101.2.1, 2012 edition), as published by the International Code Council, be and is hereby adopted as the Private Sewage Disposal Code of the [JURISDICTION], in the State of [STATE NAME] regulating and governing the design, construction, quality of materials, erection, installation, alteration, repair, location, relocation, replacement, addition to, use or maintenance of individual sewage disposal systems as herein provided; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefor; and each and all of the regulations, provisions, penalties, conditions and terms of said Private Sewage Disposal Code on file in the office of the [JURISDICTION] are hereby referred to, adopted, and made a part hereof, as if fully set out in this legislation, with the additions, insertions, deletions and changes, if any, prescribed in Section 2 of this ordinance.

Section 2. The following sections are hereby revised:

Section 101.1. Insert: [NAME OF JURISDICTION]

Section 106.4.2. Insert: [APPROPRIATE SCHEDULE]

Section 106.4.3. Insert: [PERCENTAGES IN TWO LOCATIONS]

Section 108.4. Insert: [OFFENSE, DOLLAR AMOUNT, NUMBER OF DAYS]

Section 108.5. Insert: [DOLLAR AMOUNT IN TWO LOCATIONS]

Section 405.2.5. Insert: [DATE IN THREE LOCATIONS]

Section 405.2.6. Insert: [DATE IN TWO LOCATIONS]

Section 3. That [ORDINANCE/STATUTE/REGULATION] No. _____ of [JURISDICTION] entitled [FILL IN HERE THE COMPLETE TITLE OF THE LEGISLATION OR LAWS IN EFFECT AT THE PRESENT TIME SO THAT THEY WILL BE REPEALED BY DEFINITE MENTION] and all other ordinances or parts of laws in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

Section 4. That if any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this legislation is, for any reason, held to be unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance. The [GOVERNING BODY] hereby declares that it would have passed this law, and each section, subsection, clause or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses and phrases be declared unconstitutional.

Section 5. That nothing in this legislation or in the Private Sewage Disposal Code hereby adopted shall be construed to affect any suit or proceeding impending in any court, or any rights acquired, or liability incurred, or any cause or causes of action acquired or existing, under any act or ordinance hereby repealed as cited in Section 3 of this law; nor shall any just or legal right or remedy of any character be lost, impaired or affected by this legislation.

Section 6. That the [JURISDICTION'S KEEPER OF RECORDS] is hereby ordered and directed to cause this legislation to be published. (An additional provision may be required to direct the number of times the legislation is to be published and to specify that it is to be in a newspaper in general circulation. Posting may also be required.)

Section 7. That this law and the rules, regulations, provisions, requirements, orders and matters established and adopted hereby shall take effect and be in full force and effect [TIME PERIOD] from and after the date of its final passage and adoption.

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CHAPTER 1

SCOPE AND ADMINISTRATION

PART 1—SCOPE AND APPLICATION

SECTION 101 GENERAL

[A] **101.1 Title.** These regulations shall be known as the Private Sewage Disposal Code of [NAME OF JURISDICTION] hereinafter referred to as “this code.”

[A] **101.2 Scope.** Septic tank and effluent absorption systems or other treatment tank and effluent disposal systems shall be permitted where a public sewer is not available to the property served. Unless specifically approved, the *private sewage disposal system* of each building shall be entirely separate from and independent of any other building. The use of a common system or a system on a parcel other than the parcel where the structure is located shall be subject to the full requirements of this code as for systems serving public buildings.

[A] **101.2.1 Appendices.** Provisions in the appendices shall not apply unless specifically adopted.

[A] **101.3 Public sewer connection.** Where public sewers become available to the premises served, the use of the *private sewage disposal system* shall be discontinued within that period of time required by law, but such period shall not exceed 1 year. The building sewer shall be disconnected from the *private sewage disposal system* and connected to the public sewer.

[A] **101.4 Abandoned systems.** Abandoned *private sewage disposal systems* shall be plugged or capped in an approved manner. Abandoned treatment tanks and *seepage pits* shall have the contents pumped and discarded in an approved manner. The top or entire tank shall be removed and the remaining portion of the tank or excavation shall be filled immediately.

[A] **101.5 Failing system.** When a *private sewage disposal system* fails or malfunctions, the system shall be corrected or use of the system shall be discontinued within that period of time required by the code official, but such period shall not exceed 1 year.

[A] **101.5.1 Failure.** A failing *private sewage disposal system* shall be one causing or resulting in any of the following conditions:

1. The failure to accept sewage discharges and backup of sewage into the structure served by the *private sewage disposal system*.
2. The discharge of sewage to the surface of the ground or to a drain tile.
3. The discharge of sewage to any surface or ground waters.

4. The introduction of sewage into saturation zones adversely affecting the operation of a *private sewage disposal system*.

[A] **101.6 Intent.** The purpose of this code is to provide minimum standards to safeguard life or limb, health, property and public welfare by regulating and controlling the design, construction, installation, quality of materials, location, operation and maintenance or use of *private sewage disposal systems*.

[A] **101.7 Severability.** If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this code is for any reason held to be unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this code.

SECTION 102 APPLICABILITY

[A] **102.1 General.** Where there is a conflict between a general requirement and a specific requirement, the specific requirement shall govern. Where, in any specific case, different sections of this code specify different materials, methods of construction or other requirements, the most restrictive shall govern.

[A] **102.2 Other laws.** The provisions of this code shall not be deemed to nullify any provisions of local, state or federal law.

[A] **102.3 Application of references.** Reference to chapter section numbers, or to provisions not specifically identified by number, shall be construed to refer to such chapter, section or provision of this code.

[A] **102.4 Existing installations.** *Private sewage disposal systems* lawfully in existence at the time of the adoption of this code shall be permitted to have their use and maintenance continued if the use, maintenance or repair is in accordance with the original design and no hazard to life, health or property is created by the system.

[A] **102.5 Maintenance.** *Private sewage disposal systems*, materials and appurtenances, both existing and new, and all parts thereof shall be maintained in proper operating condition in accordance with the original design in a safe and sanitary condition. Devices or safeguards that are required by this code shall be maintained in compliance with the code edition under which they were installed. The owner or the owner's designated agent shall be responsible for maintenance of *private sewage disposal systems*. To determine compliance with this provision, the code official shall have the authority to require reinspection of any *private sewage disposal system*.

[A] **102.6 Additions, alterations or repairs.** Additions, alterations, renovations or repairs to any *private sewage disposal system* shall conform to that required for a new system without requiring the existing system to comply with all the requirements of this code. Additions, alterations or repairs