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2015 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 2015 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 2015 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*[®], *International Mechanical Code*[®], *ICC Performance Code*[®], *International Plumbing Code*[®], *International Property Maintenance Code*[®], *International Residential Code*[®], *International Swimming Pool and Spa Code*[™], *International Wildland-Urban Interface Code*[®] and *International Zoning Code*[®].

The *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* provides 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 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 2015 edition presents the code as originally issued, with changes reflected in the 1997 through 2012 editions and with changes approved through the ICC Code Development Process through 2013 (completion of the Group B cycle, see below). A new edition such as this is promulgated every 3 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 Code Council maintains a copyright in all of its codes and standards. Maintaining copyright allows ICC to fund its mission through sales of books, in both print and electronic formats. The *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* is designed for adoption and use by jurisdictions that recognize and acknowledge the ICC's copyright in the code, and further acknowledge the substantial shared value of the public/private partnership for code development between jurisdictions and the ICC.

The ICC also recognizes the need for jurisdictions to make laws available to the public. All ICC codes and ICC standards, along with the laws of many jurisdictions, are available for free in a non-downloadable form on the ICC's website. Jurisdictions should contact the ICC at adoptions@icc.

safe.org to learn how to adopt and distribute laws based on the *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* in a manner that provides necessary access, while maintaining the ICC's copyright.

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 through both 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* ensures the highest degree of care, the 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 the ICC does 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 Committee Action 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 [BS] in front of them (e.g., [BS] 303.1) are considered by the IBC – Structural Code Development Committee at the Committee Action 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;
- [BS] = IBC – Structural Code Development Committee; and
- [P] = International Plumbing Code Development Committee.

For the development of the 2018 edition of the I-Codes, there will be three groups of code development committees and they will meet in separate years. Note that these are tentative groupings.

Group A Codes (Heard in 2015, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 12, 2015)	Group B Codes (Heard in 2016, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 11, 2016)	Group C Codes (Heard in 2017, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 11, 2017)
International Building Code – Fire Safety (Chapters 7, 8, 9, 14, 26) – Means of Egress (Chapters 10, 11, Appendix E) – General (Chapters 2-6, 12, 27-33, Appendices A, B, C, D, K)	Administrative Provisions (Chapter 1 of all codes except IRC and IECC, administrative updates to currently referenced standards, and designated definitions)	International Green Construction Code
International Fuel Gas Code	International Building Code – Structural (Chapters 15-25, Appendices F, G, H, I, J, L, M)	
International Existing Building Code	International Energy Conservation Code	
International Mechanical Code	International Fire Code	
International Plumbing Code	International Residential Code – IRC-B (Chapters 1-10, Appendices E, F, H, J, K, L, M, O, R, S, T, U)	
International Private Sewage Disposal Code	International Wildland-Urban Interface Code	
International Property Maintenance Code		
International Residential Code – IRC-Mechanical (Chapters 12-24) – IRC-Plumbing (Chapter 25-33, Appendices G, I, N, P)		
International Swimming Pool and Spa Code		
International Zoning Code		

Note: Proposed changes to the ICC *Performance Code* will be heard by the Code Development Committee noted in brackets [] in the text of the 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 hold code development hearings in different years, proposals for this code will be heard by committees in both the 2015 (Group A) and 2016 (Group B) code development cycles.

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 2016 to consider all code change proposals for Chapter 1 of this code and proposals for Chapter 1 of all I-Codes except the *International Energy Conservation Code*, *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 2016.

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 website 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 2012 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 list of items or a table 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 2015 edition of the *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*.

2012 LOCATION	2015 LOCATION
None	None

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 that 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 on-site waste-water treatment systems. The IPSDC provides a total approach for the on-site, 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 2015 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 code 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 where 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 that cannot be directly discharged into waterways or open ponds. Soil of the right consistency and water content provides 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 waste 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. 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 on 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

Jurisdictions wishing to adopt the 2015 *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 2015 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*, 2015 edition, including Appendix Chapters [FILL IN THE APPENDIX CHAPTERS BEING ADOPTED] (see *International Private Sewage Disposal Code* Section 101.2.1, 2015 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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>CHAPTER 1 SCOPE AND ADMINISTRATION... 1</p> <p>PART 1—SCOPE AND APPLICATION..... 1</p> <p>Section</p> <p>101 General 1</p> <p>102 Applicability..... 1</p> <p>PART 2—ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT..... 2</p> <p>103 Department of Private Sewage Disposal Inspection 2</p> <p>104 Duties and Powers of the Code Official..... 2</p> <p>105 Approval..... 3</p> <p>106 Permits 3</p> <p>107 Inspections 5</p> <p>108 Violations 6</p> <p>109 Means of Appeal..... 7</p> <p>110 Temporary Equipment, Systems and Uses..... 8</p> <p>CHAPTER 2 DEFINITIONS..... 9</p> <p>Section</p> <p>201 General 9</p> <p>202 General Definitions 9</p> <p>CHAPTER 3 GENERAL REGULATIONS..... 11</p> <p>Section</p> <p>301 General 11</p> <p>302 Specific Limitations 11</p> <p>303 Flood Hazard Areas 11</p> <p>304 Alternative Engineered Design..... 11</p> <p>CHAPTER 4 SITE EVALUATION AND REQUIREMENTS..... 13</p> <p>Section</p> <p>401 General 13</p> <p>402 Slope..... 13</p> <p>403 Soil Borings and Evaluation..... 13</p> <p>404 Percolation or Permeability Evaluation 14</p> <p>405 Soil Verification 15</p> <p>406 Site Requirements..... 16</p>	<p>CHAPTER 5 MATERIALS..... 19</p> <p>Section</p> <p>501 General..... 19</p> <p>502 Identification 19</p> <p>503 Performance Requirements 19</p> <p>504 Tanks 19</p> <p>505 Pipe, Joints and Connections 20</p> <p>506 Prohibited Joints and Connections..... 21</p> <p>CHAPTER 6 SOIL ABSORPTION SYSTEMS..... 23</p> <p>Section</p> <p>601 General..... 23</p> <p>602 Sizing Soil Absorption Systems..... 23</p> <p>603 Residential Sizing 23</p> <p>604 Other Building Sizing 23</p> <p>605 Installation of Conventional Soil Absorption Systems 23</p> <p>CHAPTER 7 PRESSURE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS..... 27</p> <p>Section</p> <p>701 General..... 27</p> <p>702 Design Loading Rate 27</p> <p>703 System Design 27</p> <p>704 Bed and Trench Construction 28</p> <p>705 Pumps..... 28</p> <p>706 Dosing 28</p> <p>CHAPTER 8 TANKS..... 31</p> <p>Section</p> <p>801 General..... 31</p> <p>802 Septic Tanks and Other Treatment Tanks 31</p> <p>803 Maintenance and Sludge Disposal..... 32</p> <p>804 Chemical Restoration..... 32</p> <p>805 Holding Tanks 34</p> <p>CHAPTER 9 MOUND SYSTEMS 35</p> <p>Section</p> <p>901 General..... 35</p>
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

902 Soil and Site Requirements 35
903 System Design 35
904 Construction Techniques 46

CHAPTER 10 CESSPOOLS 47
Section
1001 General 47

**CHAPTER 11 RESIDENTIAL WASTE-
WATER SYSTEMS..... 49**
Section
1101 General 49

CHAPTER 12 INSPECTIONS..... 51
Section
1201 General 51
1202 Inspections 51

**CHAPTER 13 NONLIQUID SATURATED
TREATMENT SYSTEMS 53**
Section
1301 General 53

CHAPTER 14 REFERENCED STANDARDS..... 55

**APPENDIX A SYSTEM LAYOUT
ILLUSTRATIONS..... 59**

**APPENDIX B TABLES FOR PRESSURE
DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS 65**

INDEX 69

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 one 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 one 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 discharge 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 water.

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 establish minimum standards to provide a reasonable level of safety health, property protection 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 edition of the code under which they were installed. The owner or the owner’s authorized 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