SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES TO THE VENTURA COUNTY BUILDING CODE FOR ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS

On November 5, 2019 the Ventura County Board of Supervisors adopted the 2019 Ventura County Building Code (VCBC), which includes the 2019 California Building Standards Code and certain model codes, and local Ventura County amendments to these codes. The Ventura County Environmental Health Division is responsible for enforcing sections of the California Plumbing Code (CPC) and the VCBC related to Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS), also known as “septic systems”.

Revisions to the VCBC include editorial and formatting changes, as well as substantive amendments which will affect the plan review, design, and installation of OWTS in unincorporated Ventura County. This handout contains a summary of the major, substantive changes to the VCBC as they relate to the permitting of OWTS.

The 2019 CPC and 2019 VCBC will become effective January 1, 2020.

VCBC APPENDIX H 201.0 – CAPACITY OF SEPTIC TANKS

201.1 Minimum Tank Capacity – A minimum septic tank capacity of 1,000-gallons is required for each dwelling unit.

Explanation: The Division will no longer require a separate tank for each dwelling unit, as long as the shared tank provides a minimum 1000-gallon capacity for each dwelling unit.

VCBC APPENDIX H 401.0 – PERCOLATION TESTS

401.5 Soil Suitability - Soil suitability shall be determined by percolation tests. The percolation rate and absorption capacity of soils shall determine whether a Conventional OWTS or an Alternate OWTS is required:

1. Areas where percolation test rates are between one (1) and ninety (90) minutes per inch are considered suitable for a conventional OWTS, provided site conditions also meet other requirements in CPC and this Code.
2. If the percolation rate is faster than one (1) minute per inch, or slower than ninety (90) minutes per inch, the installation of an Alternate OWTS will be required.

3. When the absorption capacity is greater than 5.12 gal/sq.ft./day or less than 0.83 gal/sq.ft./day, the installation of an Alternate OWTS will be required.

**Explanation:**

- **401.5:** Removed allowance for use of hydrometer analysis (soil typing) when sizing seepage pits. Soil typing is problematic due to discrepancies between site-specific percolation testing and using hydrometer analysis.
- **401.5.1-2:** Conventional OWTS allowed in areas where percolation rates are between 1 to 90 minutes per inch. Alternate OWTS in soils with percolation rates faster than 1 minute per inch or slower than 90 minutes per inch.
- **401.5.3:** Allows for the installation of an Alternate OWTS in areas where the absorption rate is greater than 5.12 gal/sq.ft./day or less than 0.83 gal/sq.ft./day.

**VCBC APPENDIX H 501.0 – SEPTIC TANK CONSTRUCTION**

501.5.1 Access Openings - Access openings shall have watertight risers, the tops of which shall be set at most six (6) inches below finished grade and access openings at grade or above shall be locked or secured to prevent unauthorized access.

**Explanation:** Septic tank risers are required to be accessible and secure. This was added to be consistent with the State Water Resources Control Board's OWTS Policy (adopted June 19, 2012).

**VCBC APPENDIX H 601.0 – DISPOSAL FIELDS**

601.9 Construction - Disposal fields shall be constructed ....

The depth of earth cover for leach lines shall be a minimum of 12 inches and a maximum of 36 inches.

**Exception:** Earth cover depth exceeding 36 inches shall be backfilled with clean rock.
Table H 601.9 – General Disposal Field Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of drain lines per field</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of each line</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom width of trench</td>
<td>18 inches</td>
<td>36 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spacing of lines, center-to-center</td>
<td>6 feet</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth of earth cover of lines</td>
<td>12 inches</td>
<td>36 inches (18 inches preferred)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade of lines</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>3 inches per 100 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filter material under drain lines</td>
<td>12 inches</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filter material over drain lines</td>
<td>2 inches</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explanation:** The maximum allowable depth of an infiltration surface is now limited to no more than 3 feet below final grade to adequately reaerate the soil and satisfy the daily oxygen demand of the applied wastewater.

Any filter material less than 30” under drain lines shall not receive 6’ square feet of absorption area credit per linear foot.

In addition to the abovementioned changes to VCBC, the following designed criteria currently required in CPC will be enforced by the Division beginning January 1, 2020:

**CPC APPENDIX H 601.0 – DISPOSAL FIELDS**

601.5 Distribution Boxes - Where two or more drain lines are installed, an approved distribution box … Distribution boxes shall be designed to ensure equal flow and shall be installed on a level concrete slab in natural or compacted soil.

For more information, please contact the Division at (805) 654-2813 or visit the OWTS Program webpage:

https://vcrma.org/onsite-wastewater-treatment-systems