



# **Waste from Grease Traps, Grit Traps, and Septic Tanks: Questions and Answers**

This publication is for those who generate waste from grease traps, grit traps, and septic tanks, including homeowners with septic tanks. If you generate any of these types of waste, it is important for you to know and comply with regulations because you are responsible for managing the waste—from the time it is generated, transported, and processed to the time of final disposal.

This guide answers many questions the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality receives about its waste regulations. This publication is for general guidance only. It does not take the place of any state or local regulations. “I” refers to a business, individual, or other generator of waste.

## **Grease-Trap Waste**

### **Am I required to have a grease trap?**

A grease trap is required for any facility (including municipal, state, or federal) whose business activity is the source of cooking grease or oil in sewage—such as restaurants, cafeterias, and food-processing plants—and is located in an area that has adopted a plumbing code. Plumbing codes do not allow discharges of grease into the sewers because discharges block the lines.

### **Who regulates my grease trap?**

Grease traps are regulated by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), your local wastewater utility, or both. The TCEQ regulates the pumping (evacuation), transportation, and disposal of all grease-trap waste. The TCEQ may regulate the design, size, and installation of grease traps and interceptors during the permitting of a septic system.

### **Do I have to register my grease trap?**

Grease traps do not need to be registered with the TCEQ; however, local authorities may require registration.

## **Who can pump my grease trap?**

Only transporters registered with the TCEQ can legally pump and transport grease-trap waste. You may call your regional TCEQ office for a list of registered transporters in your area.

## **May I dispose of my own grease-trap wastes?**

You must be registered with the TCEQ as a transporter and meet all of the reporting requirements to haul waste from grease traps. All liquid waste—including grease-trap, grit-trap, and septic-tank waste—must be transported by registered haulers. TCEQ rules do not apply to yellow grease that is to be rendered from fryers. However, you must comply with DSHS requirements concerning yellow grease.

## **Grit-Trap Waste**

### **Am I required to have a grit trap?**

Grit traps are required for permanent car washes and wash bays located in an area that has adopted a plumbing code. Grit cannot be discharged into a sewer because it blocks lines and may damage city pumps.

### **Who regulates my grit trap?**

Grit traps are regulated under your local plumbing code and by your local wastewater utility. The TCEQ regulates the pumping (evacuation), transportation, and disposal of all grit-trap waste.

### **Do I have to register my grit trap?**

Grit traps do not need to be registered with the TCEQ; however, local authorities may require registration.

### **Who can pump my grit trap?**

Only transporters registered with the TCEQ can legally pump and transport wet grit-trap waste. You may call your regional TCEQ office for a list of registered transporters in your area or visit [www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/sludgetransporter](http://www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/sludgetransporter).

Some operators of car washes dry their own grit-trap waste by using evaporation beds—see 30 TAC 330.13(h).<sup>1</sup> While Texas rules do not give construction specifications for the beds, they must be designed and maintained to prevent water or waste from escaping into the surrounding area or storm drains. This rule is not an exception from the sludge transporter requirements. Any other treatment of these wastes must be authorized by the TCEQ. (See the last page of this publication for information about finding rules on the TCEQ website.)

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<sup>1</sup> Short for 'Title 30, Texas Administrative Code, Subsection 330.13(h).'

## **May I dispose of my own grit-trap wastes?**

All grit-trap wastes—wet or dry—must be disposed of at an authorized facility. Because grit-trap wastes may be contaminated with benzene, lead, oils, and other automotive fluids, landfills usually require tests before accepting these wastes. Not all landfills can accept grit-trap waste, so please call the landfill before transporting.

## **Septic-Tank Waste**

### **Who regulates my septic tank?**

Septic tanks are regulated by the TCEQ directly or by a TCEQ-authorized agent from local government. The TCEQ regulates the installation of septic tanks, as well as the pumping (evacuation), transportation, processing, and disposal of septic-tank waste.

### **Do I have to register my septic tank?**

The TCEQ or TCEQ-authorized agent must authorize construction of your septic system before its installation, and then inspect the system when installation is complete to formally permit the system and authorize operation. Permits are also required for existing systems that are upgraded or repaired. (See the last page of this publication for contact information about septic tanks, also known as on-site wastewater or sewage facilities or OSSFs.)

### **Who can pump my septic tank?**

Only transporters registered with the TCEQ can legally pump and transport septic-tank waste. You may call your local TCEQ regional office for the list of registered transporters in your area.

## **Transporting Waste**

### **What information is required on a registered transporter's trip ticket?**

The TCEQ requires the following information to be on a transporter's multi-part trip ticket. This paper trail tracking the waste is also called a *manifest*. All transporters must meet the requirements in 30 TAC 312 and provide a completed manifest to their customers. A sample manifest appears in *Transporting Sludge Wastes in Texas* (TCEQ publication RG-309).

#### **Generator**

The generator of the waste should check the following to make certain that the information is complete and correct:

- your name, address, and phone number

- the type of waste generated, such as chemical toilet, grease trap, etc.
- trap or tank capacity and type and amount of waste collected
- date of service

You should take note of the disposal site or receiving facility to be used and sign the manifest, verifying the information. After the material has been disposed of, you should receive a final copy of the manifest with all signatures for your files.

### ***Transporter***

The transporter of the waste should check the following to make certain that the information is complete and correct:

- the transporter's name, address, and phone number
- the transporter's TCEQ registration number
- if required by local authority, the issued transporter's city or county permit number
- how many gallons were transported

The driver's name and signature should be written in the appropriate space. The transporter is responsible for sending the final copy of the manifest with all signatures to the generator.

### ***Receiving Facility***

The facility receiving the waste should check the following to make certain that the information is complete and correct:

- the receiving facility's name and TCEQ permit or registration number
- the receiving facility's address
- the date
- the amount of waste received

The site representative's name and signature may be used as verification of the proper disposal.

## **How do I know that my waste is going to an authorized site?**

You are responsible for the proper disposal of the waste you generate at your facility. Ask the transporter in advance where your waste will be sent and the receiving facility's telephone number. Contact the receiving facility to confirm that it is authorized to receive your waste. After shipment, contact the receiving facility listed on the returned copy of the manifest to verify its authorization and receipt of the waste.

You also have the option of choosing a receiving facility for your wastes. Check with transporters in your area, and choose one registered to use the receiving facility of your choice. Often, the disposal facility will have

a list of transporters authorized to use its site. In order to verify your transporter's TCEQ registration, ask to see a copy and check for a dated sticker on the truck's door. Each vehicle registered with the TCEQ is required to have both.

## **Can a transporter pump both my septic tank and my grease trap in the same load?**

Transporters cannot mix wastes with different characteristics, except in very rare cases. Most facilities are not authorized to store, process, or dispose of these mixed wastes. If you plan to recycle grease-trap waste, it certainly cannot be mixed with other wastes. Grease-trap waste that is designated for recycling is called brown grease. Transporters of brown grease must be registered under 30 TAC 312.

Please note that TCEQ transportation regulations do not apply to used cooking oil from fryers and similar sources that do not come from or pass through grease traps. This is called yellow grease, and it is rendered and recycled. Transporting this grease is regulated under DSHS rules. Yellow grease must be stored in a special container for pickup by the recycler.

A recycler of yellow grease does not need to be registered under 30 TAC 312; however, the DSHS regulations found in 25 TAC 221, Subchapter A, must be followed. Transporters and recyclers of yellow grease are required to apply for a rendering license from the DSHS. You may call the DSHS Meat Safety Assurance Unit at 512-834-6760 or visit their Web page at [www.dshs.state.tx.us/msa/render.shtm#license](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/msa/render.shtm#license).

## **If a registered transporter hauls my waste, am I still responsible for its proper disposal?**

Yes. If your waste is illegally dumped, you are considered to be at fault and you could face enforcement proceedings. Remember, as the generator of any waste, you must ensure that your waste is disposed of at a registered receiving facility. The generator could be held liable for any cleanup costs linked to an improper receiving facility. In addition, an early cleanup will limit the spread of contamination and decrease the costs for remediation.

### ***Tips for Increased Compliance***

- Carefully select a registered transporter.
- Verify the information on the manifest: receipt of proper amount, disposal at correct facility, signature of receiving facility employee.
- Promptly clean up any spilled waste.
- Report any problems to the TCEQ regional office as soon as possible.

## **What does it cost to have my trap or tank pumped?**

Costs vary depending on such factors as choice of transporter, distance to receiving facility, frequency of pumping, volume pumped, receiving facility

charges, testing requirements, and more. Keep in mind that the TCEQ has no jurisdiction over prices; they are set at the transporter's discretion.

## **How often should I have my trap or tank pumped?**

Frequency of pumping depends on the size of your trap or tank, the amount of waste you generate, and local regulations. A local plumber or registered installer may be able to help with calculations. You should arrange to have the tank or trap pumped before it becomes full—avoid the added costs of fixing problems caused by overfilled tanks, such as clogged lines, traps, and tanks.

## **What happens if my waste is disposed of improperly?**

The following problems may result:

- foul odors (potential nuisance)
- breeding grounds for flies and other pests
- salmonella and botulism poisoning
- exposure to infectious diseases for those who come in contact with it
- soil contamination
- water contamination from seepage into well fields, creeks, and other bodies of water
- clogged sewer lines
- loss of aquatic life

Remember, as the generator of waste you could be held liable for improper disposal.

## **What are my responsibilities as a generator?**

As a generator of waste from grease or grit traps or septic tanks, your responsibilities include:

- properly maintaining any traps located within your sewer service lines;
- ensuring the proper handling and disposal of the wastes you generate;
- maintaining the paper trail on your waste (check with local authorities to find out how long to keep these records); and
- taking any feasible steps to reduce the amount of waste you generate.

## **Contacts**

### ***Texas Commission on Environmental Quality <[www.tceq.texas.gov](http://www.tceq.texas.gov)>***

Small Business and Local Government  
Assistance Hotline

800-447-2827

Website

<[www.TexasEnviroHelp.org](http://www.TexasEnviroHelp.org)>

Transporter registration

512-239-3695

Environmental-complaint hotline	888-777-3186
On-site sewage facilities	512-239-0914
Website	< <a href="http://www.tceq.texas.gov/licensing/ossf">www.tceq.texas.gov/licensing/ossf</a> >
Online information about rules	< <a href="http://www.tceq.texas.gov/rules/current.html">www.tceq.texas.gov/rules/current.html</a> >
Texas State Department of Health Services Meat Safety Assurance Unit	512-834-6760
Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners Uniform Plumbing Code	800-854-2766

## **For More Information**

For assistance with environmental compliance for small businesses and local governments call the Small Business and Local Government Hotline, 800-447-2827, or visit <[www.TexasEnviroHelp.org](http://www.TexasEnviroHelp.org)>.