567—69.9 (455B) Secondary treatment—subsurface soil absorption systems. Subsurface soil absorption systems are the best available treatment technology and shall always be used where possible.

69.9(1) *General requirements.*

a. Locations. All subsurface soil absorption systems shall be located on the property to maximize the vertical separation distance from the bottom of the absorption trench to the seasonal high groundwater level, bedrock, hardpan or other confining layer, but under no circumstances shall this vertical separation be less than 3 feet.

b. Soil evaluation. A percolation test or professional soil analysis is required before any soil absorption system is installed.

(1) *Percolation test.* The percolation test procedure is outlined in Appendix B.

(2) *Alternative analysis.* If a professional soil analysis is performed, soil characteristics such as soil content, color, texture, and structure shall be used to determine a loading rate.

(3) *Acceptable percolation rate.* An area is deemed suitable for conventional soil absorption if the average percolation rate is 60 minutes per inch or less and greater than 1 minute per inch. However, if an alternative soil absorption system is proposed (e.g., mound system), then the percolation test should be extended to determine whether a percolation rate of 120 minutes per inch is achieved.

(4) *Confining layer determination.* An additional test hole 6 feet in depth or to rock, whichever occurs first, shall be provided in the center of the proposed absorption area to determine the location of groundwater, rock formations or other confining layers. This 6-foot test hole may be augered the same size as the percolation test holes or may be made with a soil probe.

c. Groundwater. If the seasonal high groundwater level is present within 3 feet of the trench bottom final grade and cannot be successfully lowered by subsurface tile drainage, the area shall be classified as unsuitable for the installation of a standard subsurface soil absorption system. The administrative authority shall be consulted to determine an acceptable alternative method of wastewater treatment.

d. Site limitations. In situations where specific location or site characteristics would appear to prohibit installation of a soil absorption system, design modifications which could overcome such limitations may be approved by the administrative authority. Examples of such modifications could be the installation of subsurface drainage, use of shallow or at-grade trenches, drip irrigation, or mound systems or use of pretreated effluent.

e. Prohibited drainage. Roof, foundation and storm drains shall not discharge into or upon subsurface absorption systems. Nothing shall enter the subsurface absorption system which does not first pass through the septic tank.

f. Prohibited construction. There shall be no construction of any kind, including driveways, covering the septic tank, distribution box or absorption field of a private sewage disposal system. Vehicle access should be infrequent, primarily limited to vegetation maintenance.

g. Driveway crossings. Connecting lines under driveways shall be constructed of Schedule 40 plastic pipe or equivalent and shall be protected from freezing.

h. Easements. No wastewater shall be discharged upon any property under ownership different from the ownership of the property or lot upon which the wastewater originates unless easements to that effect are legally recorded and approved by the administrative authority.

69.9(2) *Sizing requirements.*

a. Percolation and soil loading charts. Table IIIa provides a correlation between percolation rates and soil loading rates. Table IIIb provides soil loading rates based upon soil texture and structure. Table IIIa and Table IIIb shall be used to determine the appropriate soil loading rate. Table IIIc specifies linear feet of lateral trenches required based upon the soil loading rate, wastewater flow rate, and trench width. Table IIId provides a method to determine the size of an absorption bed. Absorption beds (Table IIId) shall not be used except when the lot size limitations preclude the installation of a lateral trench system. Further details concerning limitations of this alternative shall be obtained from the administrative authority before authorization for installation is requested.

b. Unsuitable absorption. Conventional subsurface soil absorption trenches shall not be installed in soils that have a percolation rate less than 1 minute per inch or greater than 60 minutes per inch. Plans for an alternative method of wastewater treatment shall be submitted to the administrative authority for approval prior to construction.

Table IIIa

Maximum Soil Application Rates Based Upon Percolation Rates

	Monthly Averages	
Percolation Rate (minutes per inch)	Septic Tank Effluent[1] BOD_5 30 mg/L - 220 mg/L TSS 30 mg/L - 150 mg/L (gals/sq ft/day)[2]	Pretreated Effluent $BOD_5 \leq 30$ mg/L TSS ≤ 30 mg/L (gals/sq ft/day)
0 to 5	1.2	1.6
Fine sands	0.5	0.9
6 to 10	0.8 – 0.6	1.2
11 to 29	0.6 – 0.5	0.9
30 to 45	0.5 – 0.4	0.7
46 to 60	0.4 – 0.2	0.5
61 to 120	0.0	0.3
Greater than 120	0.0	0.0

NOTE: "BOD" means biochemical oxygen demand. "TSS" means total suspended solids.
[1] Typical waste strengths for domestic waste. Pretreatment should be considered for waste of higher strength.
[2] Percolation rates and soil loading rates do not precisely correlate; therefore, a range is provided.

Table IIIb

Maximum Soil Loading Rates Based Upon Soil Evaluations in Gallons per Square Foot per Day (gal/ft²/day) for Septic Tank Effluent. Values in ( ) are for secondary treated effluent.

Soil Texture	Single Grain	Massive	Structure Granular, Blocky, or Prismatic			Platy	
			Weak	Moderate	Strong	Weak	Moderate to

							Strong
Coarse sand and gravel	1.2 (1.6)	X	1.2 (1.6)	X	X	1.2 (1.6)	X
Medium sands	0.7 (1.4)	X	0.7 (1.4)	X	X	0.7 (1.4)	X
Fine sands	0.5 (0.9)	X	0.5 (0.9)	X	X	0.5 (0.9)	X
Very fine sands*	0.3 (0.5)	X	0.3 (0.5)	X	X	0.3 (0.5)	X
Sandy loam	X	0.3 (0.5)	0.45 (0.7)	0.6 (1.1)	0.65 (1.2)	0.4 (0.6)	0.3 (0.5)
Loam	X	0.4 (0.6)	0.45 (0.7)	0.5 (0.8)	0.55 (0.8)	0.4 (0.6)	0.3 (0.5)
Silty loam	X	NS	0.4 (0.6)	0.5 (0.8)	0.5 (0.8)	0.3 (0.5)	0.2 (0.3)
Clay loam	X	NS	0.2 (0.3)	0.45 (0.7)	0.45 (0.7)	0.1 (0.2)	0.1 (0.2)
Silty clay loam	X	NS	0.2 (0.3)	0.45 (0.7)	0.45 (0.7)	NS	NS

NOTE: "X" means not found in nature. "NS" means not suitable for soil absorption.

* Flow rates are difficult to determine for some very fine sands; experience may provide better information and flow rates.

Table IIIc

Minimum Length of Absorption Trenches in Feet

	2 bedroom 300 gal.		3 bedroom 450 gal.		4 bedroom 600 gal.		5 bedroom 750 gal.		6 bedroom 900 gal.	
Width of trench in feet	2′	3′	2′	3′	2′	3′	2′	3′	2′	3′
Soil loading rate gal/ft^2										
0.1	Not suitable for soil absorption trenches									
0.2	750	500	1125*	750	1500*	1000*	1875*	1250*	2250*	1500*
0.3	500	333	750	500	1000*	666	1250*	833*	1500*	1000*
0.4	375	250	562	375	750	500	938*	625	1125*	750
0.5	300	200	450	300	600	400	750	500	900*	600
0.6	250	167	375	250	500	333	625	417	750	500
0.7	214	143	321	214	428	286	536	357	643	429
0.8	188	125	281	188	375	250	469	312	562	375
0.9	167	111	250	167	333	222	417	278	500	333
1.0	150	100	225	150	300	200	375	250	450	300
1.1	136	91	205	136	273	182	341	227	409	273
1.2	125	84	188	125	250	167	313	208	375	250

* Requires pressure distribution (pump)

Table IIId
Alternative Option for Use of Absorption Bed*

Percolation Rate min./inch	Absorption Area/Bedroom sq. ft.	Loading Rate/Day gal./sq. ft.
1 – 5	300	.5
6 – 15	400	.375
16 – 30	600	.25

*Absorption beds may only be used when site space restrictions require and shall not be used when the soil percolation rate exceeds 30 min./inch.

69.9(3) *Construction details for all soil absorption trenches.*

a. Depth. Soil absorption trenches shall not exceed 36 inches in depth unless authorized by the administrative authority, but a shallower trench bottom depth of 18 to 24 inches is recommended. Not less than 6 inches of porous soil shall be provided over the laterals. The minimum separation between trench bottom and groundwater, rock formation or other confining layers shall be 36 inches even if extra rock is used under the pipe.

b. Length. No soil absorption trench shall be greater than 100 feet long.

c. Separation distance. At least 6 feet of undisturbed soil shall be left between each trench edge on level sites. The steeper the slope of the ground, the greater the separation distance should be. Two feet of separation distance should be added for each 5 percent increase in slope from level.

d. Grade. The trench bottom should be constructed level from end to end. On sloping ground, the trench shall follow a uniform land contour to maintain a minimum soil cover of 6 inches and a level trench bottom.

e. Compaction. There shall be minimum use or traffic of heavy equipment on the area proposed for soil absorption. In addition, it is prohibited to use heavy equipment on the bottom of the trenches in the absorption area.

f. Fill soil. Soil absorption systems shall not be installed in fill soil. Disturbed soils which have stabilized for at least one year shall require a recent percolation test or soil analysis.

g. Bearing strength. Soil absorption systems shall be designed to carry loadings to meet AASHTO H-10 standards.

h. Soil smearing. Soils with significant clay content should not be worked when wet. If soil moisture causes sidewall smearing, the installation should be discontinued until conditions improve.

69.9(4) *Gravel systems.*

a. Gravel. A minimum of 6 inches of clean, washed river gravel, free of clay and clay coatings, shall be laid below the distribution pipe, and enough gravel shall be used to cover the pipe. This gravel shall be of such a size that 100 percent of the gravel will pass a 2½-inch screen and 100 percent will be retained on a ¾-inch screen. Limestone or crushed rock is not recommended for soil absorption systems; however, if used, it shall meet the following criteria:

(1) *Abrasion loss.* The percent wear, as determined in accordance with the AASHTO T 96, Grading C, shall not exceed 40 percent.

(2) *Freeze and thaw loss.* When gravel is subjected to the freezing and thawing test, Iowa DOT Materials Laboratory Test Method 211, Method A, the percentage loss shall not exceed 10 percent.

(3) *Absorption.* The percent absorption, determined in accordance with Iowa DOT Materials Laboratory Test Method 202, shall not exceed 3 percent.

b. Trench width. Soil absorption trenches for gravel systems shall be a minimum of 24 inches and a maximum of 36 inches in width at the bottom of the trench.

c. Grade. The distribution pipes shall be laid with a minimum grade of 2 inches per 100 feet of run and a maximum grade of 6 inches per 100 feet of run, with a preference given to the lesser slope.

d. Pipe. Distribution pipe shall be PVC rigid plastic meeting ASTM Standard 2729 or other suitable material approved by the administrative authority. The inside diameter shall be not less than 4 inches, with perforations at least ½ inch and no more than ¾ inch in diameter, spaced no more than 40 inches apart. Two rows of perforations shall be provided located 120 degrees apart along the bottom half of the tubing (each 60 degrees up from the bottom centerline). The end of the pipe in each trench shall be sealed with a watertight cap unless, on a level site, a footer is installed connecting the trenches together. Coiled perforated plastic pipe shall not be used.

e. Gravel cover. Unbacked, rolled, 3½-inch-thick fiberglass insulation, untreated building paper, synthetic drainage fabric, or other approved material shall be laid so as to separate the gravel from the soil backfill.

69.9(5) *Gravelless pipe systems.*

a. Application. Gravelless subsurface soil absorption systems may be used as an alternative to conventional 4-inch pipe placed in gravel-filled trenches. However, these systems shall not be used in areas where conventional systems would not be allowed due to poor permeability, high groundwater, or insufficient depth to bedrock.

b. Installation. The manufacturer's specifications and installation procedures shall be adhered to.

c. Material. The 10-inch I.D. corrugated polyethylene tubing used in gravelless systems shall meet the requirements of ASTM F667, Standard Specification for Large Diameter Corrugated Polyethylene Tubing.

d. Perforations. Two rows of perforations shall be located 120 degrees apart along the bottom half of the tubing (each 60 degrees up from the bottom centerline). Perforations shall be cleanly cut into each inner corrugation along the length of the tubing and should be staggered so that there is only one hole in each corrugation.

e. Top marking. The tubing should be visibly marked to indicate the top of the pipe.

f. Filter wrap. All gravelless drainfield pipe shall be encased, at the point of manufacture, with a geotextile filter wrap specific to this purpose.

g. Trench width. The trench width for the gravelless system shall be 24 inches.

h. Length of trench. The total length of absorption trench for a 10-inch gravelless pipe installation shall be the same as given in Table IIIc for a 2-foot-wide conventional soil absorption trench.

69.9(6) *Chamber systems.*

a. Application. Chamber systems may be used as an alternative to conventional 4-inch pipe placed in gravel-filled trenches. However, chamber systems shall not be used in areas where conventional systems would not be allowed due to poor permeability, high groundwater, or insufficient depth to bedrock.

b. Installation. The manufacturer's specifications and installation procedures shall be adhered to.

c. Length of trench. The total length of soil absorption trench for chambers 15 to 22 inches wide shall be the same as given in Table IIIc for a 2-foot-wide conventional soil absorption trench. Chambers 33 inches wide or greater shall be sized as given in Table IIIc for a 3-foot-wide conventional soil absorption trench.

d. Sidewall. The chambers shall have at least 6 inches of sidewall effluent soil exposure height below the invert of the inlet.

69.9(7) *Expanded polystyrene (EPS) aggregate system.*

a. Application. EPS aggregate systems may be used as an alternative to conventional 4-inch pipe placed in gravel-filled trenches. However, EPS aggregate systems shall not be used in areas where conventional systems would not be allowed due to poor permeability, high groundwater, or insufficient depth to bedrock.

b. Installation. The manufacturer's specifications and installation procedures shall be adhered to.

c. Length of trench. The total length of soil absorption trench for 12-inch EPS aggregate bundles shall be the same as given in Table IIIc for a 2-foot-wide conventional soil absorption trench. Twelve-inch EPS aggregate bundles 33 inches wide or greater shall be sized as given in Table IIIc for a 3-foot-wide conventional soil absorption trench.

d. Gravel cover. Unbacked, rolled, 3½-inch-thick fiberglass insulation, untreated building paper, synthetic drainage fabric, or other approved material shall be laid so as to separate the EPS aggregate from the soil backfill.

69.9(8) *Gravity distribution.* Dosing is always recommended and preferred to improve distribution, improve treatment and extend the life of the system.

a. On a hillside, septic tank effluent may be serially loaded to the soil absorption trenches by drop boxes or overflow piping (rigid sewer pipe). Otherwise, effluent shall be distributed evenly to all trenches by use of a distribution box or commercial distribution regulator approved by the administrative authority.

b. Design. When a distribution box is used, it shall be of proper design and installed with separate watertight headers leading from the distribution box to each lateral. Header pipes shall be rigid PVC plastic pipe meeting ASTM Standard 2729 or equivalent.

c. Height of outlets. The distribution box shall have outlets at the same level at least 4 inches above the bottom of the box to provide a minimum of 4 inches of water retention in the box.

d. Baffles. There shall be a pipe tee or baffle at the inlet to break the water flow.

e. Unused outlets. All unused outlet holes in the box shall be securely closed.

f. Materials. All distribution boxes shall be constructed of corrosion-resistant rigid plastic materials.

g. Level outlets. All outlets of the distribution box shall be made level. A 4-inch cap with an offset hole approximately 2½ inches in diameter shall be installed on each outlet pipe. These caps shall be rotated until all outlets discharge at the same elevation. Equivalent leveling devices may be approved by the county board of health.

h. Equal length required. The soil absorption area serviced by each outlet of the distribution box shall be equal.

69.9(9) *Dosing systems.*

a. Pump systems.

(1) Pump and pit requirements. In the event the effluent from the septic tank outlet cannot be discharged by gravity and the proper lateral depths still maintained, the effluent shall discharge into a watertight pump pit with an inside diameter of not less than 24 inches, equipped with a tight-fitting manhole cover at grade level. The pump shall be of a submersible type of corrosion-resistant material.

(2) Pump setting. The pump shall be installed in the pump pit in a manner that ensures ease of service and protection from frost and settled sludge. The pump shall be set to provide a dosing frequency of approximately four times a day based on the maximum design flow. No onsite electrical connections shall be located in the pump pit. These connections shall be located in an exterior weatherproof box.

(3) Pressure line size. The pressure line from the pump to the point of discharge shall not be smaller than the outlet of the pump it serves.

(4) Drainage. Pressure lines shall be installed to provide total drainage between dosing to prevent freezing or shall be buried below frost level up to the distribution box.

(5) High water alarm. Pump pits shall be equipped with a sensor set to detect if the water level rises above the design high water level when the pump fails. This sensor shall activate an auditory or visual alarm to alert the homeowner that repairs are required.

(6) Discharge point. The effluent shall discharge under pressure into a distribution box or may be distributed by small-diameter pipes throughout the entire absorption field.

b. Dosing siphons. Dosing siphons may also be used. The manufacturer's specifications shall be adhered to for installation. Similar dosing volumes and frequencies are recommended. Dosing siphons require periodic cleaning to ensure their continued proper operation.

c. Filtered pump vaults. A filtered pump vault is a device that is installed in a septic tank and houses a pump and screens effluent until it is pumped. Filtered pump vaults may be used when dosing volume is less than 50 gallons. Filtered pump vaults require periodic inspection and cleaning to ensure their continued proper operation.

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