

# Residential Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

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## Design Handbook



**New York State Department of Health  
Bureau of Water Supply Protection  
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### 6.13 Abandoning/Decommissioning Septic Tanks

There are no NYSDOH regulations for abandoning/decommissioning septic system tanks and other system components (such as pump and siphon tanks, ETUs, cesspools, seepage pits, distribution boxes). Contact your LHD to check for local codes or guidance. In the absence of such local codes or guidance, the following is recommended: Whenever septic tanks or other system components are to be abandoned/decommissioned because public sewers are being installed or replacing a tank(s), the tank(s) and other system components can be removed and taken to a solid waste facility or decommissioned in-place. Septic system tanks must be properly decommissioned to minimize potential health and safety hazards. Contact your local solid waste management official to discuss options for proper disposal of the tanks and used absorption field soils, stone, pipe and other components. If the tank will be left in-place, a NYSDEC permitted waste transporter should pump out the tank, wash off, and remove as much residuals as possible. The use of lime as a disinfectant is an option for treating the tank(s) and absorption area and system components. Care should be taken when accessing and cleaning septic system tanks. Properly disconnect all alarms and electrical services, if any, from septic system tanks and other system components. The top of the tank should be knocked in and the bottom punctured, if possible, to allow for drainage of rain or surface water. Backfill the tank with sand or gravel to prevent a safety hazard. The area that was disturbed should be properly graded and seeded. If settling occurs over time, it may be necessary for additional fill material. Absorption field components (soils, pipe, aggregate, etc.) can be left in place unless local laws or codes require their removal. For the purpose of future home construction projects, property improvements and/or home sale, a record of the location of the abandoned/decommissioned septic tank and other components should be made.