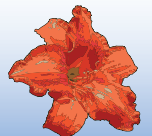




## Information and Instructions for Wastewater Customers

### **SouthAlabamaUtilities**

Office and Emergency Phone Number:  
(251) 649-4316  
P.O. Box 319  
4800 McCrary Road  
Semmes, AL 36575

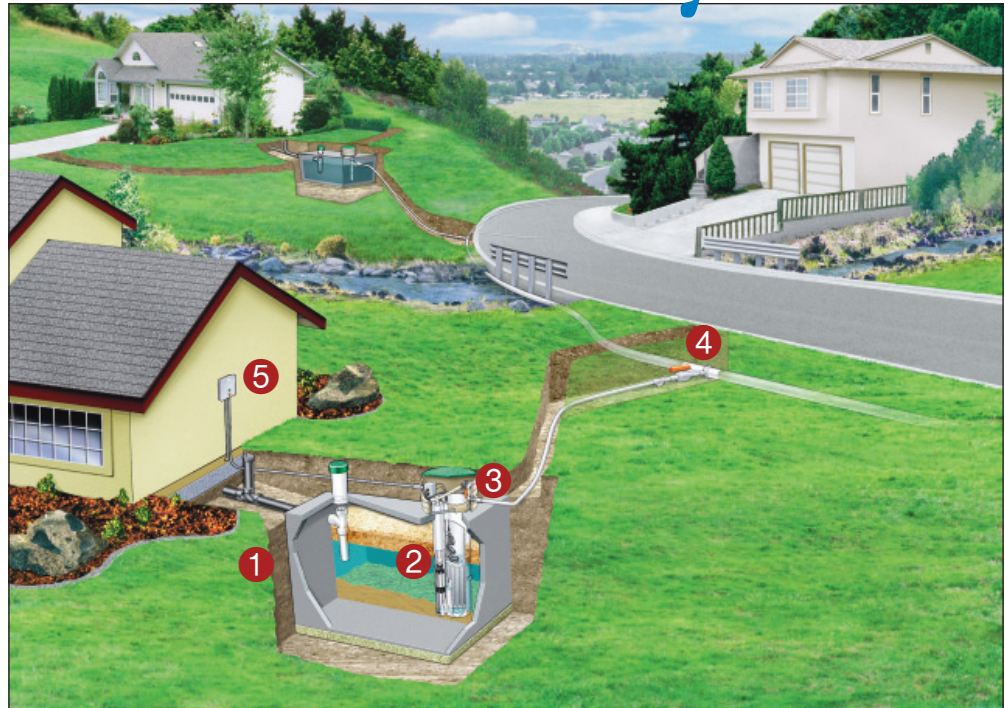


# An Introduction to Your Wastewater System

*Your house has an effluent sewer system that is serviced and maintained by South Alabama Utilities.*

*Effluent sewers are different from the sewer you may be used to. Effluent sewers are kind of a water system in reverse, with a watertight underground tank somewhere in the yard. (See illustration.)*

*Here's how it works:*



- 1 Wastewater flows from your house to the underground tank. There, it settles into three layers: sludge on the bottom, scum on the top, and clear effluent in the middle.
- 2 The effluent is pumped (or flows by gravity) through a filter.
- 3 Then the filtered effluent (and ONLY the effluent) flows through service lines, to a main line 4, that runs to a treatment system.
- 5 A control panel operates the pump, which pumps the effluent out of your tank, to the treatment system.

Solids remain in the tank, where they decompose naturally. The whole system is environmentally friendly and energy efficient.

South Alabama Utilities checks your system regularly, maintains the pump and control panel, and pumps the tank when necessary.

If you take good care of your system, it will work quietly and invisibly for you, just like any other sewer system. If you don't, it won't. That means, you can't do the following:

- You can't pour grease down the drain.
- You can't pour harsh de-cloggers, such as Drano®, down the drain. (Use a plunger or metal snake instead.)
- You can't flush any nonfood items down the drain (for example, no sanitary napkins, no condoms).

Enclosed is a pamphlet with more information about "Do's and Don'ts" for your system. Please familiarize yourself with this pamphlet. It is your responsibility to take good care of the tank that's on your property. If your tank has to be pumped prematurely because of misuse, you will be responsible for paying that cost. This is written into the deed on your property.

If you have any problems with your wastewater system, please call South Alabama Utilities at 251-649-4316.

## SouthAlabamaUtilities

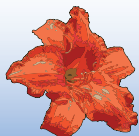
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# How to Handle Alarms and Power Outages



## Handling Alarms

You have a control panel for your wastewater system on the side of your home near the front of the house. The control panel has a red light and alarm on the front.

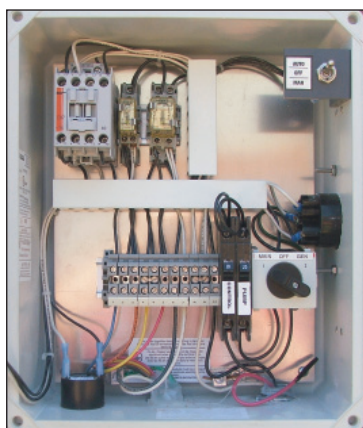
If the liquid in the wastewater tank gets too high or too low, the red light and a loud alarm will come on. To silence the alarm, press the red light on the front of the panel. Then call SAU at (251) 649-4316. Service is available 24 hours a day.

## Handling Power Outages

Your tank has 24 hours of reserve capacity, for emergencies. During a long power outage, though (say, after a hurricane), you can use a portable generator (that's at least 4,000 Watts) to power the panel so that your tank doesn't get too full. The panel has a 120 V receptacle to which a standard extension cord can be connected.



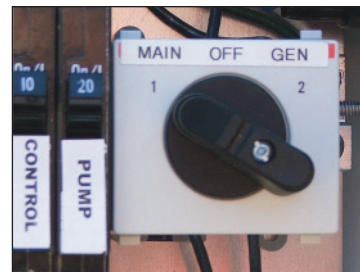
Inside the panel are two switches: one labeled AUTO/OFF/MAN, and one labeled MAIN/OFF/GEN.



The AUTO/OFF/MAN switch should stay in the AUTO position, regardless of whether you are using main power or generator power.

To connect a generator to the panel, turn the MAIN/OFF/GEN switch to the OFF position.

Connect the extension cord from the generator to the receptacle on the side of the panel, and start the generator. Then switch the MAIN/OFF/GEN switch to the GEN position. If the tank is full, the alarm and light will come on. Press the lighted button to reset the alarm, and the pump will pump the tank down to the normal level.



After the pump goes off, you can unplug the generator and return the MAIN/OFF/GEN switch to MAIN while waiting for power to be restored. Since the tank has at least 24 hours' reserve capacity, you probably won't have to pump the tank more than once a day — and maybe less. Because, during a power outage, you probably won't be using as much water as usual.

Of course, if you have a whole-house emergency generator, you won't need a portable generator. When the whole-house generator starts, the pump will automatically pump as needed, just as it normally does.

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# Frequently Asked Questions

## *Are effluent sewer systems new?*

No. They've been around for decades. There are hundreds of them in the U.S., and they are highly recommended by the EPA.



## *What happens to the solids that accumulate in the tank?*

The tank digests more than 80% of the solids. The rest are easily managed through planned pumping schedules.

## *Will there be lots of service people on my property?*

No. Service time averages less than 1 hour every 5 years per home. Meter readers for water and electricity come by far more frequently.

## *Will the system smell?*

No. Not if properly designed and installed. Any wastewater collection system will smell if not properly designed and installed.

## *Do the pumps use a lot of electricity?*

No. The electricity to run them averages less than \$1 per month.

## *Do I have to do anything different, since I have an underground tank?*

You have to be careful about what goes down household drains. Read the "Do's and Don'ts" in your Homeowner's Manual. Actually, these "Do's and Don'ts" also apply to people who have traditional sewer systems. With misuse, they get clogged and damaged, too. You just rarely hear about it!

## *What happens to the effluent that leaves the tank?*

It goes to a treatment system that uses either gravel or textile media to filter the effluent even more, before it is discharged to the soil, for final filtration. South Alabama Utilities owns and maintains the treatment systems.

## *What if something goes wrong with my tank?*

Each property has a control panel with an alarm. If something goes wrong, you turn off the alarm and call South Alabama Utilities at (251) 649-4316.

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