



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION**

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## **SEWAGE DISPOSAL IN AN EMERGENCY**

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN?**

In an emergency, sewage disposal systems may become inoperable. Water pressure can be lost, sewer lines and septic systems can be damaged. Toilets won't flush without water, sewage may back up and broken water lines may become contaminated by sewage.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THERE IS A LOSS OF WATER PRESSURE?**

If there is a loss of water pressure but the sewage disposal system is still functional, you can collect water in a bucket to flush the toilet. Typically, if there is a loss of water, the toilet will still have one flush left – toilets automatically fill up the bowl after being flushed

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I NEED TO MANUALLY FLUSH MY TOILET?**

1. Use a bucket to collect water from another source, such as a pool, water heater, or rain barrel.
2. Remove the toilet tank lid.
3. Fill the toilet tank with the collected water until it reaches the top of the overflow tube.
4. Flush the toilet.



### **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THERE IS A SEWER OR SEPTIC SYSTEM FAILURE?**

If a sewer or septic line blockage is suspected or obvious, discontinue discharge of wastewater in house or building drains and do not flush toilets. Avoid contact with any overflowing wastewater or sewage. Divert wastewater or sewage by ditch, sandbags, or temporary pipeline into a functioning sewer line manhole, or contain by sandbags or berm. Avoid diverting wastewater or sewage into areas of habitation or domestic water supplies.

### **WHAT CAN I USE?**

1. Portable camp toilets, R-V toilets, porta-potties, etc.
2. Large extra-strength trash bags (double bagged) may be placed in watertight plastic or metal containers with tight fitting lids, or used as liners in toilets. Household disinfectant can be used for odor control. Final disposal can be by burying or sanitary sewer when notified by public officials.
3. A dug latrine or trench, 2-3 feet deep, can be used to bury human waste. Spread a thin layer of powdered lime and a layer of earth each time it is used.

