



Facts About... General Permit No. 18-CT

General Permit for the Discharge of Composting Toilet Wastewater

Background

This proposed General Permit is for the discharge of compost toilet liquid (wastewater) from composting toilets to groundwater - via land application. This includes compost toilet liquids from private dwellings and other types of facilities that use composting toilet technology. Maryland environmental regulations require a permit for the discharge of any quantity of wastewater to ground and surface waters, and includes wastewater discharged by land application. Land application means that the wastewater is discharged directly onto vegetated ground and is considered a beneficial reuse of the wastewater.

Compost toilet liquid is also considered domestic sewage. Typically, domestic sewage is managed in rural areas for homes and businesses by discharging this wastewater into an onsite subsurface (septic) disposal system. Approval for this type of subsurface discharge is from the local approving authority - usually the county Environmental Health Department. However, because compost toilet liquid is discharged directly onto the ground and not into the subsurface, a discharge permit must be obtained from the Maryland Department of Environment.

The Department issues both *individual* and *general* permits. *General* permits are developed for business operations or treatment processes that discharge wastewater with similar chemical characteristics. *General* permits typically require testing of the discharged wastewater for pollutants of concern with numeric limits that must be met, and operation and maintenance requirements to protect human health and the environment. *Individual* and *General* permits are both effective for 5 years.

A General permit simplifies the permit issuance process for the applicant and improves the efficiency of the Department's processing of application for discharge permit authorization. This results in better service to the regulated community by reducing the time to obtain permit coverage. In addition, there are cost savings for the applicant because general permit processing does not require newspaper publication informing the public of the proposed discharge.

Until now, the Department has permitted the onsite discharge of compost toilet wastewater via individual discharge permits. Because the wastewater discharges from most compost toilets have similar chemical characteristics and the permits have similar testing and permit

conditions, this category of dischargers is appropriate for coverage by a general permit. Owner/operators will have the choice to apply for individual or general permit coverage.

Who is this General Permit for?

This permit is for the onsite discharge of compost toilet liquid by land application within the territorial boundaries of the State of Maryland. All residences and facilities that want to land apply compost toilet liquid are required to obtain a discharge permit.

What Types of Operations Are Not Authorized by this Permit?

1. The discharge of *graywater*. ‘*Graywater*’ means wastewater drained from sinks, tubs, showers, dishwashers, clothes washers (excluding laundry water from soiled diapers), and other non-toilet sources.

The applicant must submit documentation from the local approving authority, typically your county (Environmental) Health Department, *that if required*, an onsite sewage disposal system (OSDS) permit has been issued. Evidence of this shall be submitted to the Department’s Wastewater Permits Program (WWPP) in support of this General Permit prior to the installation of the composting toilet,

2. The subsurface discharge of compost toilet liquid/wastewater.
3. The discharge of compost toilet liquid/wastewater to surface waters.
4. The land application of compost toilet liquid/wastewater in *critical areas* - *UNLESS* the compost toilet system has been approved by the State of Maryland as Best Available Technology (BAT) for the treatment of nitrogen.

Do All Composting Toilets Need a Permit?

No. There are many different types of composting toilet systems available for use. Most composting toilets generate both liquid and solid wastes. This permit is only needed if the compost toilet liquid will be discharged to groundwater via land application (i.e. discharged directly onto the ground surface). If the compost toilet liquid is disposed of in any other manner, such as via an OSDS, then a discharge permit from the State of Maryland is not required. Discharge of compost toilet liquid into an OSDS would be permitted by your local approving authority, typically your county (Environmental) Health Department.

What Will the Permit Regulate?

This general permit regulates the most common pollutants of concern that may be found in compost toilet liquid. In addition, the permit manages the nutrients in the compost toilet liquid by appropriate distribution of the wastewater for beneficial plant uptake.

Compost Toilet Liquids Chemical Testing: Fecal Coliform Numeric Discharge Limits

This permit requires wastewater testing for fecal coliform before the compost toilet liquid may be land applied. The amount of fecal coliform in the compost toilet liquid must be less than the permit's numeric limit of 200 mpn/100 ml prior to land application. This proposed testing and discharge limit for fecal coliform is the same as is currently found in individual discharge permits.

What Costs are Associated with this Permit?

There will be cost savings for the permittee in obtaining *general* permit coverage compared to *individual* permit coverage. Processing an *individual* permit includes the costs of publishing notices in a local newspaper informing the public of the permit application. These costs for publication are paid by the applicant. With *general* permit processing, there is no requirement for these public notices and these costs to the permittee are eliminated. Costs associated with wastewater testing will be the same as in an *individual* permit, and the frequency of testing is the same, i.e. prior to land application to ensure compliance with the effluent limits.

There are no application or annual fees for this General Permit. This is the same for Individual permits

For more information:

This permit can be found at <http://clickmeterlink.com/18CT>. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Eisner or Tracy Rocca-Weikart of the Wastewater Permits Program at 410.537.3778 or by email to the following addresses:

mike.eisner@maryland.gov or tracy.rocca-weikart@maryland.gov.

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