



# County of San Diego

## Department of Environmental Health

### Land and Water Quality Division

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## **GRAYWATER SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS FOR A SINGLE CLOTHES WASHER**

### **Introduction**

Graywater is untreated wastewater from bathroom sinks, bathtubs, showers and clothes washers but does not include wastewater from toilets, kitchen sinks or dishwashers. A graywater system is a type of onsite wastewater treatment system that utilizes trenches, subsurface drip irrigation systems, and mulch basins for wastewater disposal but can have the added benefit of using the wastewater as an irrigation source. Regulations for the use of graywater can be found in Chapter 16 of the California Plumbing Code (CPC).

The County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health (DEH) is the Administrative Authority for the oversight and permitting of graywater systems in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County. Similarly, each incorporated city in San Diego County administers graywater regulations within their city limits. If you reside in an incorporated city, please contact your city's Building Department for design and permitting requirements.

### **Clothes Washer System**

A clothes washer system is a graywater system that only receives flow from a single domestic clothes washer in a one or two family dwelling and distributes it to the yard for subsurface irrigation of landscape plants or to a subsurface disposal field. These systems are exempt from a construction permit as long as no modifications to the existing plumbing are necessary and the system is in compliance with the following requirements. The exemption from a permit does not apply to dwellings with uses such as daycare, elder care or other group care facilities.

1. The graywater system must not include a potable water connection or a pump and must not affect other building, plumbing, electrical or mechanical components including structural features, egress, fire-life safety, sanitation, potable water supply piping or accessibility.
2. The graywater system must be designed to allow the user to direct the flow to either the irrigation/disposal field or the building sewer. The means of changing the direction of the graywater flow must be clearly labeled and readily accessible to the user.
3. The graywater system must be contained on the same property where the graywater is generated.
4. Graywater must be directed to and contained within an irrigation field, disposal field, or mulch basin.

5. Ponding or runoff of graywater is prohibited and will be considered a nuisance. During periods of heavy rainfall and saturated soil conditions, the graywater must be diverted to the building sewer.
6. Graywater may be released above the ground surface provided at least two inches of mulch, rock, or soil, or a solid shield covers the release point. At no time can the graywater surface above the top of the cover material. To ensure no surfacing of the graywater, it is recommended that more than two inches of cover be provided over the dispersal mechanism and that the graywater be discharged into a basin dug at least two inches into the ground.
7. The groundwater table must be at least three feet below the lowest discharge point in the graywater dispersal field or mulch bed. If it is determined that this separation cannot be met, the graywater system cannot be installed.
8. Graywater systems must be designed to minimize contact with humans and domestic pets.
9. Graywater must not be used to irrigate root crops or food crops where the edible parts of food crop touch the soil.
10. Water used to wash diapers or similarly soiled or infectious garments cannot be used and must be diverted to the building sewer.
11. Graywater must not contain hazardous chemicals derived from activities such as cleaning car parts, washing greasy or oily rags, or disposing of waste solutions from home photo labs or similar hobbyist or home occupational activities.
12. An operation and maintenance manual must be provided to the owner. Directions must indicate the manual is to remain with the building throughout the life of the system and indicate that upon change of ownership or occupancy, the new owner or tenant must be notified that the structure contains a graywater system.
13. Exemption from construction permit requirements does not grant authorization for any graywater system to be installed in a manner that violates other provisions of the CPC or any other laws or ordinances of the Enforcing Agency.

For more information regarding graywater systems, please review the documents titled ***Graywater Frequently Asked Questions*** and the ***Graywater Systems for Outdoor Irrigation Design and Procedures Manual*** which can be found on the DEH website at [http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/lu\\_graywater\\_systems.html](http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/lu_graywater_systems.html). The FAQ document provides basic information on the use of graywater while the Design and Procedures Manual provides detailed information for the sizing, permitting and installation of graywater systems including clothes washer systems.