Knowing your wastewater system

Vacuum wastewater systems service about 2,600 properties in 11 different areas in Sydney and the Illawarra. We use vacuum systems in flat, low lying areas where gravity systems are not feasible.

What is a vacuum wastewater system?
Vacuum systems take wastewater from multiple private wastewater services connected to a chamber or 'pot' in the front or back yard of one of the properties. When the pot fills to a certain level, a vacuum valve inside the pot opens and the wastewater is sucked by vacuum into plastic airtight pipes. The wastewater then moves along to a specially designed pumping station that collects and pumps it to the nearest point in the gravity system.

Who maintains these systems?
Sydney Water's contractor, Thiess maintains and repairs our vacuum wastewater systems. Vehicles used for maintenance and emergency work display Sydney Water and Thiess signage. Sydney Water staff and contractors always wear or carry photo identification.

How does stormwater affect the system?
Vacuum wastewater systems are not designed to cope with additional storm water flow. Stormwater can enter the system through illegal storm water connections, such as connected roof guttering, or house wastewater service gullies that are lower than 75 mm above ground level. Stormwater can cause the vacuum wastewater system to overload and fail.
How can you help?

It is important to understand that your actions, including stormwater entering the system from your property, can affect the performance of the whole vacuum wastewater system. There are things you can do to ensure the system operates correctly:

**Do**

✔ Check that your house stormwater system is not connected to the wastewater system. If it is connected, you will need to have this rectified.

✔ Check that your house wastewater service gully is at least 75 mm above ground level, but also at least 150mm below the lowest wastewater fixture within your house.

✔ Keep the chamber lid and surrounding area free of obstacles to allow easy and safe access for repairs and maintenance at all times.

✔ Report continuous noise of 30 seconds or more coming from a pot.

✔ Report any damage to the system to Sydney Water, including broken breather lines.

✔ Call Sydney Water to confirm access arrangements if the ‘pot’ on your property is behind a locked gate.

**Don’t**

✗ Backwash or pump out pools during or immediately after heavy rain.

✗ Park vehicles or machinery over chamber lid.

✗ Pour grease, fat or other rubbish down the sink.

✗ Flush items such as small toys, paddle-pop sticks, toilet bowl freshener holders and personal hygiene products down the toilet.

✗ Bury or landscape your gardens over the vacuum pot lid or valve chamber lid

✗ Alter the ground level around the wastewater system

To report service faults, emergencies or confirm access arrangements call us on 13 20 90.

To know more about vacuum wastewater systems, visit our website at www.sydneywater.com.au.