

Evan Bayh, Governor  
John C. Bailey, M.D., State Health Commissioner

File

Indiana State Department of Health  
1330 West Michigan Street  
P.O. Box 1964  
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1964  
317/633-0100 Fax: 317/633-0776



Indiana State Department of Health

An Equal Opportunity Employer

July 2, 1992

**TO:** Local Health Departments

**FROM:** Alan M. Dunn, Chief *AMD*  
Residential Sewage Disposal Section  
Division of Sanitary Engineering  
AC (317) 633-0160

**SUBJECT:** Residential Sewage Disposal  
Amish Dwellings

We have completed a review of the legal and technical aspects of residential wastewater disposal from Amish dwellings at the request of representatives of Amish communities. A review of the provisions of ISDH Rule 410 IAC 6-8.1 was conducted with respect to their constitutional rights based on their religious convictions, and their lifestyle which results from those convictions.

We understand that many of the Amish dwellings are equipped with only a kitchen sink, pitcher pump, and drain for their indoor water supply and wastewater disposal within the residence. This drain has traditionally discharged to a grease trap which then discharged, ultimately, to a stream, ditch, or river. Such discharges constitute public health hazards, create environmental degradation, and are in direct violation of Indiana water pollution control laws, public health laws, and ISDH Rule 410 IAC 6-8.1.

The approval of the disposal of wastewater by any individual or group of individuals in a manner which would be contrary to state statutes and which would create public health hazards and environmental degradation would place this agency in an untenable position. Therefore, approvals for such discharges cannot be granted. Any dwelling which generates wastewater must be provided with a legal, technologically sound, method of wastewater disposal.

With respect to those Amish who, because of their religious convictions, limit indoor plumbing to the kitchen sink served by a manual pump, we cannot object to the residential sewage disposal system being designed on the basis of estimated daily wastewater flow rather than the number of bedrooms within the

dwelling. Any Amish family which installs additional plumbing within the residence would be expected to meet all of the provisions of Rule 410 IAC 6-8.1 on the size and design of their residential sewage disposal system.

Based on an estimation of wastewater flows, it appears that the provisions of ISDH Rule 410 IAC 6-8.1-50(b) and 52 would apply to the size and design of the absorption field to serve the dwelling, except that the estimated daily flow would be used instead of the number of bedrooms in calculating the size of the absorption field. This is, of course, assuming that the depth of permeable soil and the depth to seasonal high water table are sufficient for the installation of a subsurface trench gravity flow trickle feed soil absorption system.

In addition, we cannot object to solids removal using primary treatment facilities which are properly sized for the estimated daily flow and which are properly baffled to prevent the discharge of solids to the absorption field.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

cc: Howard Cundiff  
Durland Patterson  
Ben Hippensteel  
Mike Hoover  
Sandy Clark  
Beth Bauer  
Ezra Lengacher  
Staff