

IWS Application Process

(Individual Wastewater System)

Department of Health Wastewater Branch (DOH-WWB)

July 7, 2026



KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

Individual Wastewater Systems

Individual Wastewater Systems (IWS) are on-site systems for treating and disposing wastewater.

Approved IWS treatment equipment:

- Septic tank
- Aerobic treatment unit
- Passive aerobic systems that still require a septic tank (i.e., Eljen, Presby)
- Bioreactor garden (i.e., Ridge to Reefs)
- Composting toilets and incinerator toilets. Composting toilets and incinerator toilets only treat toilet waste, shower and kitchen wastewater still requires treatment and disposal.

DOH-WWB webpage:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/>

Hawai'i Administrative Rules, Title 11, Chapter 62:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/files/2023/04/11-62-Wastewater-Systems-CtrlFEnter.pdf>

IWS page (except cesspools):

<https://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/home/iws/>





WASTEWATER BRANCH

Mission Statement

The Wastewater Branch administers the statewide engineering functions relating to water pollution control, municipal and private wastewater treatment works, individual wastewater systems and the Clean Water State Revolving fund. The Wastewater Branch's mission is to protect public health and the environment.

Please Note:

Our jurisdiction does not extend to properties serviced by sewer. To see if you are serviced by sewer, check your water bill for a sewer charge or check if you receive a sewer bill. Any complaints or questions related to wastewater issues on these properties should be directed to the relevant county department or private sewer system provider.



Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR)

- **Chapter 11-61**
Wastewater Treatment Plant Personnel Certification
Effective January 2, 2002 [pdf](#) 
- **Chapter 11-62**
Wastewater Systems
Amendment Effective March 21, 2016 [pdf](#)  | [searchable pdf](#) 
- **Act 224 from the 2025 Hawaii Session Laws**
Amendment to HRS 342D that changes the number of dwellings allowed for an IWS [pdf](#) 
- Click [here](#) to find other Hawaii Administrative Rules.



Quick Links

- [What sort of Wastewater System do I have?](#)
- [Cesspool Conversion Working Group](#)
- [Financial Support Programs for Cesspool Conversion](#)



Announcements



NEW [New Design for Wastewater/Sludge Pumper and Hauler Placard](#)

NOVO Payment Required Notification for 4808 Ohu Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746. See Notice and Finding of Violation and Order section at bottom of page.

Cesspools

Cesspools are substandard systems. They don't treat wastewater, they merely dispose of it.

[General Info](#)[Cesspool Conversion Working Group](#)[OSDS Survey and Assessment Studies](#)[Financial Support Programs for Cesspool Conversion](#)**Individual Wastewater Systems (IWS) [Except Cesspools]**

IWS are on-site systems for treating and disposing of domestic wastewater. They are commonly either septic tanks or aerobic treatment units.

[Engineer Resources](#)[Homeowner Resources](#)**Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW)**

All other domestic wastewater treatment and disposal systems that are not IWS or cesspools. This includes private and municipal WWTWs, as well as WWTWs that produce recycled water for reuse applications.

[Engineer Resources](#)[Operator Resources](#)[Owner Resources](#)**Recycled Water Program**

Derived from domestic wastewater that has been treated to various grades, recycled water has become more critical due to the state's growing population, limited potable water resources, and wastewater disposal issues.

[Annual Results](#)[Reuse-Water Users Resources](#)[Gray-Water Resources](#)**Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Program**

The Clean Water State Revolving Program provides low interest loans for the construction of point source and non-point source water pollution control projects.

[Amendments and Public Notices](#)**Board of Certification (BOC)**

The SWOTC works with the BOC to implement the Operator Certification Program that is established by Chapter 11-61.

[Meeting and Minutes](#)[Operator Certification](#)[Continuing Education](#)**Pumper and Haulers**

Operations that haul or pump wastewater, wastewater sludge, and grease.

[Registration Instructions](#)**Biosolids Reuse**

Treatment works or operations treating domestic wastewater sludge for the production of Biosolids that will be land applied to condition the soil or fertilize crops or

Non-Domestic Wastewater

Applies to buildings or operations generating wastewater from agricultural, commercial, or industrial activities.





[Home](#) » [Wastewater Branch](#) » Individual Wastewater Systems

INDIVIDUAL WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

Individual Wastewater Systems (IWS) are on-site systems for treating and disposing wastewater. Approved IWS treatment equipment are: septic tank, aerobic treatment unit, passive aerobic systems that still require a septic tank (i.e., Eljen, Presby), bioreactor garden (i.e., Ridge to Reefs), composting toilets and incinerator toilets. Composting toilets and incinerator toilets only treat toilet waste, shower and kitchen wastewater still requires treatment and disposal.

Engineer Resources

To file for an Individual Wastewater System (IWS) online, please go to: wastewater.ehawaii.gov

Additional Information

- Requirements for Review Process of IWS | [.pdf](#)
- Large Capacity Cesspools Memorandum | [.pdf](#)

Forms

- Application Form | [.pdf](#)
- Owner's Certification Form | [.pdf](#)
- Site Evaluation Form | [.pdf](#)
- IWS Construction Inspection Report (Revised 10-6-22) | [.pdf](#)
- Contractor Certification Form | [.pdf](#)
- Large Capacity Cesspool (< 1000 gpd) Backfilling Final Completion Report | [.pdf](#)
- Existing Cesspool Information Form | [.pdf](#)



Homeowner Resources

How do I upgrade my existing cesspool or replace my failing cesspool or septic system?

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1st step: Hire a **Hawaii licensed civil engineer** to help you develop a plan for a new individual wastewater system (IWS). An IWS is either a septic or aerobic treatment unit system. You can check if an engineer is a licensed civil engineer by using the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs's (DCCA) [Professional Vocational Licensing Search Tool](#) to find the engineer's record, check the License Class, and then the License's status.

Alternatively, we also have a list of licensed civil engineers that prepare IWS plans in the State of Hawaii is provided below:

- List of Licensed Civil Engineers that prepare IWS plans | [.pdf](#) |

2nd step: Your licensed engineer will submit plans to the Wastewater Branch for review and approval. Plans may be submitted online by your engineer to wastewater.ehawaii.gov. Below are a list items that need to be submitted with the IWS plans.

- Application Form
- Owner's Certification Form
- Site Evaluation Form

3rd step: After plans are approved by the Wastewater Branch, you must hire a licensed contractor holding an **A, C-9, C-37, C-37a or C-43** license. You can also check this by using the DCCA's [Professional Vocational Licensing Search Tool](#) to find the contractor's record, check the License Class, and then the License's status. Hiring a contractor holding a license other than what is required will not be accepted by the Wastewater Branch.

4th step: Your licensed civil engineer should be monitoring the construction of the IWS. At the end of construction, your engineer is required to submit a final construction inspection report with a completed contractor certification form to the Wastewater Branch.

- IWS Construction Inspection Report
- Contractor Certification Form

5th step: Your licensed engineer submits the completed IWS Construction Inspection Report with Contractor Certification Form to the Wastewater Branch. The Wastewater Branch will issue an approval to use letter to your engineer if there are no discrepancies with the IWS Construction Inspection Report and Contractor Certification Form. The Wastewater Branch will not be able to issue you a final approval to use of your new IWS unless these two forms are submitted by your licensed engineer. Your new IWS will be in non-compliance if the Wastewater Branch does not issue an approval to use of your system.

Should you have questions, please email your questions to doh.wwb@doh.hawaii.gov or contact one of our offices. If you are a licensed civil engineer and would like to be added to our list, please email us your information or call the Oahu office.



KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

IWS Application Scenarios

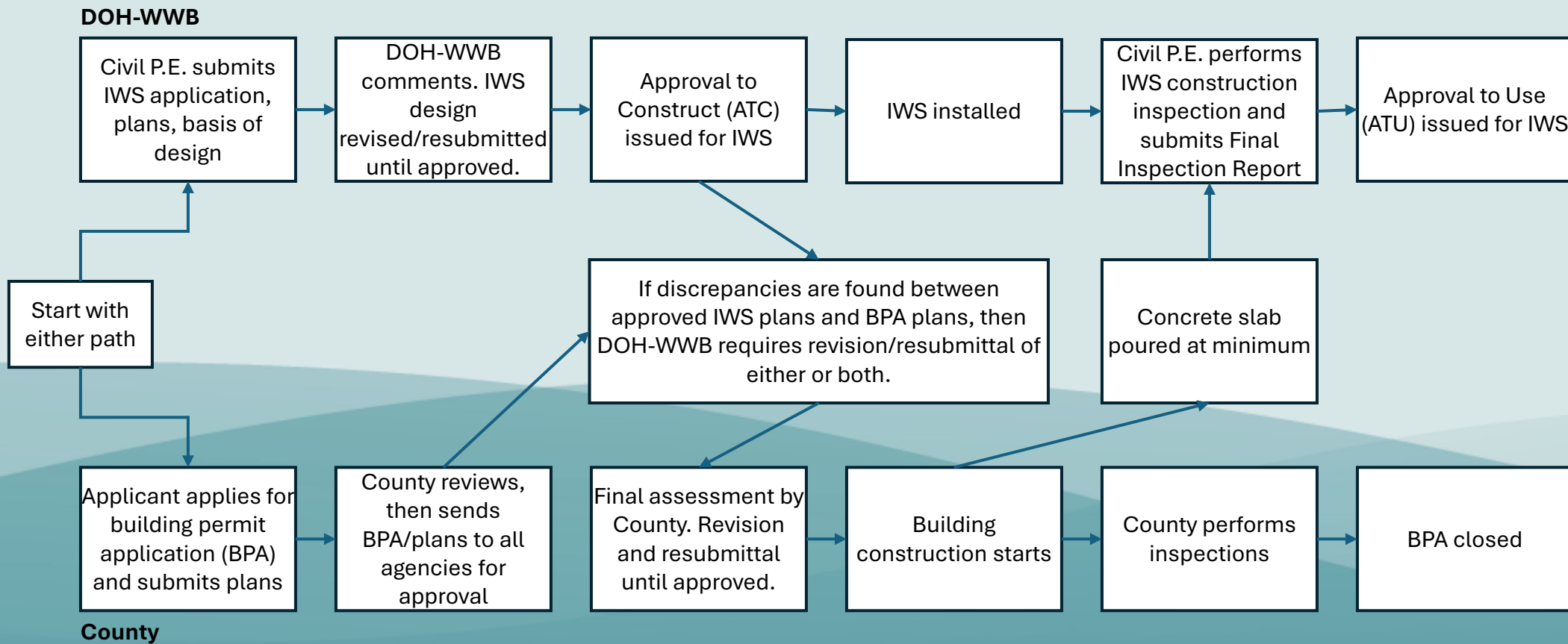
- 1. New Building Construction,
New IWS**
- 2. Existing Building Renovation*,
Existing IWS**
- 3. Existing Building Renovation*,
New IWS (Cesspool Conversion)**
- 4. No Building
Construction/Renovation,
New IWS**

*Existing building renovations include:

- Kitchen/Bathroom remodel
- Window/Door remodel
- Add bedroom
- Add floor area
- Add bathroom
- Add Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

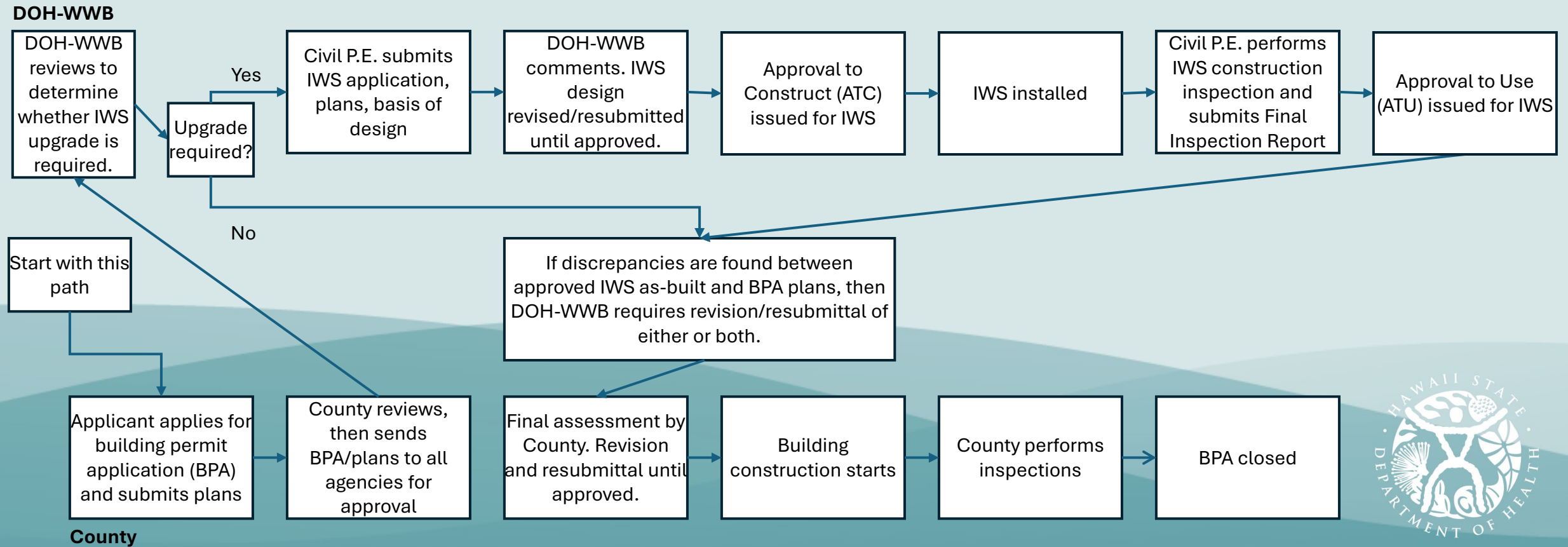


1. New Building Construction, New IWS



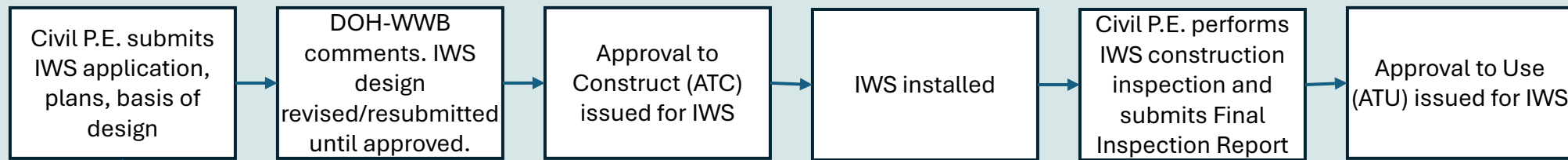
2. Existing Building Renovation, Existing IWS

3. Existing Building Renovation, New IWS (CP Conversion)



4. No Building Construction/Renovation, New IWS (CP Conversion)

DOH-WWB



Start with this path

No building permit application (BPA).

No coordination with County.

County



Variance Requirements

- Owner's civil P.E. must justify the requirement for a variance from HAR 11-62 and compliance with the three (3) variance criteria in HRS 342D-7(c):
 - “...**No variance shall be granted** by the department **unless** the application and the supporting information clearly show that:
 - 1) The **continuation of** the function or operation involved in the **discharge of waste** occurring or proposed to occur by the **granting of the variance** is in the **public interest** as defined in section 342D-6;
 - 2) The discharge occurring or proposed to occur **does not substantially endanger human health or safety**; and
 - 3) **Compliance with the rules or standards** from which variance is sought would produce **serious hardship without equal or greater benefits** to the **public.**” [emphasis added]

Variances

- Variances are not typical and are requested when an engineer seeks exceptions to HAR 11-62 requirements.
- An IWS application must be submitted and reviewed by DOH-WWB IWS engineer before DOH-WWB will start processing/reviewing the variance.



Variance Requirements

- HRS 342D-6(g) Permits; procedures for.:
 - “(g) In determining the **public interest** regarding permit issuance or renewal, the **director** shall consider the **environmental impact** of the proposed action, any **adverse environmental effects** that **cannot be avoided** should the action be implemented, the **alternatives** to the proposed action, the relationship between **local short-term uses** of the **environment** and the **maintenance** and **enhancement** of **long-term productivity**, any **irreversible** and **irretrievable commitments** of **resources** that would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented, and any **other factors** that the **director, by rule, may prescribe**; provided that any determination of public interest shall **promote** the **optimum balance** between **economic development** and **environmental quality**. [emphasis added]

Variances

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- An IWS application must be submitted and reviewed by DOH-WWB IWS engineer before DOH-WWB will start processing/reviewing the variance.



IWS Application Process Considerations

- Homeowner is responsible to hire a licensed professional engineer and licensed contractor.
- Licenses can be searched at State Dept. of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Professional Vocational Licensing (DCCA PVL) website:
<https://mypvl.dcca.hawaii.gov/public-license-search/>



IWS Application Process Considerations

- A licensed engineer with more wastewater experience will more likely:
 - Improve planning before construction,
 - Increase efficiency through the application process, and
 - Maximize quality assurance/control/oversight during construction.
- Homeowner is responsible to confirm that their licensed engineer has professional liability insurance. DCCA PVL does not require licensed engineers to have professional liability insurance.



IWS Installation Process Considerations

- A licensed contractor with more wastewater experience will more likely:
 - Improve planning and coordination with the licensed engineer before construction,
 - Maximize safety during construction,
 - Increase efficiency through the construction process, and
 - Maximize quality of the installed IWS.
- DCCA PVL requires licensed contractors to have worker's compensation and general liability/property damage insurance. Homeowner is responsible to confirm that their licensed contractor has other insurances (e.g., vehicle, environmental construction liability, surety bond, etc.)



IWS Installation Process Considerations

- Complex projects and disagreements on the interpretation of HAR 11-62 can cause delays.
- The IWS and building permit processes are often intertwined. IWS approval to construct is invalidated if:
 - A county does not issue a building permit within one year of DOH's IWS approval
 - Construction of the IWS has not begun within one year of approval
 - A county revokes a building permit with an associated IWS



Any Questions?

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Mahalo!



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