



The Sanitary Pit Privy

Introduction

The sanitary pit privy may be an effective method for the disposal of human body waste if it is properly located, constructed and maintained. While few residential homes in towns and cities use this method of sewage disposal, many cottages and parks still find use for the “outhouse”.

Because the improper disposal of human wastes is a serious health problem, the Department of Health and Community Services has developed standards governing pit privies. The purpose of this pamphlet is to explain these standards to those who use and construct pit privies.

Site Suitability

Pit privies should not be placed in densely populated areas, boggy or marshy areas, or areas where soil is minimal and bedrock is largely exposed. Soil depth and type should be such that:

- the pit is at least 1 m x 1 m (3 ft x 3 ft) square and 1.5 m (5 ft) deep
- the bottom of the pit must be 1 m (3 ft) above the groundwater table, bedrock, or other impervious material

Location

To guard against disease-causing microbes from the privy getting into a water supply or crossing to someone else’s land, the privy should be located with the following separation distances:

Item	Separation Distance
Buildings	7.5 m (25 ft)
Property Boundaries	4.5 m (15 ft)
Embankments	4.5 m (15 ft)
Drilled Wells	16 m (53 ft)
Dug Wells or Springs	30 m (98 ft)
Lakes, rivers, streams, etc.	30 m (98 ft)

Construction

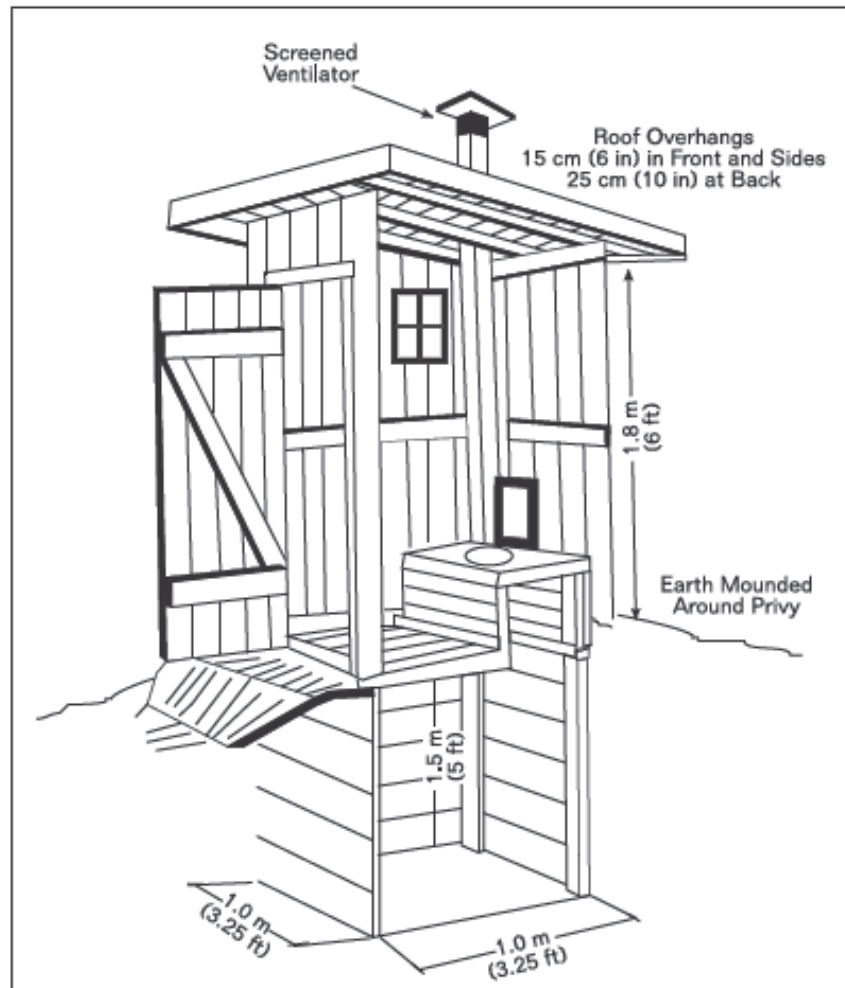
The illustration on the reverse side shows the construction of the pit privy.

- The structure should be made of strong durable weather-proof materials
- The floor should be solid and supported by a sill
- The privy should be equipped with one or more seats having close fitting covers supported by an enclosed bench
- The privy should be equipped with a self closing door and at least one screened window for ventilation
- The bench or riser and floor should be watertight and fly-proof so that flies and other pests do not have access to the pit contents
- A ventilation duct, screened at the top, should extend from the underside of the bench to a point above the roof
- Sides of the privy pit should be shored to prevent collapse
- The ground around all privies should be graded to keep surface water away from the pit

Maintenance

Care and attention are required from time to time to keep the pit privy in good repair. When the pit contents reach within 45 cm (18 inches) of the ground surface, another pit should be dug and the privy moved over it. The old pit should then be limed and filled in with earth.

Keeping the privy clean and in good repair is just as important to health as the proper location and construction. Soap and water used regularly and attention to minor repairs when needed, will keep the privy in good sanitary condition. It is a matter of good health and good housekeeping to keep the privy clean and sanitary at all times.



Where can I find out more?

If you have any questions about sewage treatment and disposal, please do not hesitate to contact the Government Service Centre or Regional Health Authority nearest you.



Department of Health and Community Services
Department of Government Services
Regional Health Authorities

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Wastewater Awareness