

Updated requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs)

June 16, 2025

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



To align with the Los Angeles County Health and Safety Code Title 11, Section 11.38.710, the Director of Public Health is authorized to review the Conventional and Non-Conventional Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems - Requirements and Procedures, a minimum of once every five (5) years and revise them as necessary to protect public health and the waters of the State.

As a result of the Palisades and Eaton Fires, the Department of Public Health (Public Health) is reviewing the permitting process to streamline the rebuild process for fire victims whose properties are on onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS). After discussing with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board and reviewing the Local Agency Management Plan, and Los Angeles County Code, Public Health has decided to update the requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs) on an emergency basis to implement changes immediately.

These changes affect:

- All new ADU/JADU proposed projects
- All projects currently under review
- All projects that are already approved but not yet installed

Effective immediately, ADU's and JADU's are no longer separate units, they are now considered additional bedrooms in the Los Angeles County Conventional and Non-Conventional Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems – Requirements and Procedures.

Please review the following key updates and requirements:

- **Density Requirement**
The 2.5-acre density requirement no longer applies to ADU or JADU additions as they are no longer separate units.
- **Counted as Bedroom Additions**
ADU or JADU additions, guest houses, and cabanas without bedrooms are counted as having a minimum of one bedroom.
- **Use of Existing OWTS**
An existing conventional OWTS may be used without an upgrade if the existing septic tank and dispersal field are adequately sized to accommodate the proposed bedroom(s) of the ADU/JADU.
 - A system evaluation is required for the current OWTS if it has been in use for over 15 years.

- A 100% future expansion area for a dispersal system must be identified and tested if it has not been previously tested or if the ADU/JADU is within the previously approved future expansion area or its setbacks.
- **Upgraded or New OWTS**

If the proposed ADU cannot be accommodated by the existing OWTS, either the existing OWTS must be upgraded or a new OWTS for the ADU/JADU must be installed:

 - If the property is located near an **Impaired Water Body** (polluted water that is not safe for drinking), regardless of percolation results, a non-conventional onsite wastewater treatment system (NOWTS) is required.
 - If the property is not located near an Impaired Water Body, the existing OWTS may be upgraded if the existing OWTS is not the right size. The OWTS must be upgraded to accommodate both the main house and the ADU/JADU. A complete feasibility study is required for the expansion of the existing dispersal system and for the future expansion area. The type of system (conventional OWTS or NOWTS) will be determined based on the site's percolation rate.
 - If the existing OWTS cannot be upgraded, a new separate OWTS must be installed. The type of system (conventional OWTS or NOWTS) will be determined based on the site's percolation rate.

For further information or assistance, please contact the **Onsite Wastewater Treatment Program** at (626) 430-5380, email at dlanduse@ph.lacounty.gov, or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh.