

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

VILLAGE OF CORRALES WASTEWATER UTILITY (SEWER) SYSTEM AND INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY OWNER SERVICE CONNECTIONS

I. AVAILABILITY OF SEWER SERVICE; WHEN CONNECTION IS REQUIRED.

Q. Where is sewer service available?

A. The sewer utility primarily serves properties along Corrales Road between Meadowlark Lane on the south and Old Church Road on the north (the “**Primary Service Area**”). Some service is also available for properties along Corrales Road south of Meadowlark.

Q. I have a business located on Corrales Road between Meadowlark Lane and Old Church Road. Do I have to connect to the sewer immediately?

A. Generally, no. Under the terms of the Village’s ordinance, property owners in the Primary Service Area are required to connect to the sewer within a reasonable time, but not by a specified date. However, it will likely cost you less to connect sooner rather than later, because connection fees increase over time. Also, certain circumstances such as a failed septic system or a change of property ownership may require an immediate connection to the sewer.

Q. I own a home on Corrales Road between Meadowlark Lane and Old Church Road. Do I have to connect to the sewer immediately?

A. Generally, no. For homes as for businesses in the Primary Service Area, the requirement is that you must connect to the sewer within a reasonable time. Also, you may be required to connect immediately if your existing septic system has failed or if there is a change in ownership of the property.

Q. I own a home on Corrales Road south of Meadowlark. Can I connect to the sewer?

A. Yes, if there is a connection point within a reasonable distance of your home. The sewer line south of Meadowlark is primarily to transport wastewater to Albuquerque’s sewer system near the intersection of Coors and Alameda. However, a limited number of connection points for local service have been provided. The Village Administrator or Public Works Director can advise you of the closest available connection point.

Q. Is a sewer connection required for homes on Corrales Road south of Meadowlark?

A. No. Connection to the sewer outside the Primary Service Area is entirely at the option of the homeowner.

- Q. I own a vacant parcel of land on Corrales Road. Must I make a sewer connection?**
- A. No. No sewer connection is required for undeveloped land or for agricultural land if it does not also have a home or other building (with plumbing) on it. However, if you build on the land in the future, you will be required to make a sewer connection at that time, rather than discharge the wastewater to a leach field.
- Q. I plan to sell my home or business property on Corrales Road in the Primary Service Area (Meadowlark to Old Church)? Must the property be connected to the sewer system?**
- A. Yes. As a condition of the sale, either the seller or the purchaser must apply for sewer service, make the sewer connection, and close the leach field from the existing septic system.
- Q. I have property on Corrales Road in the Primary Service Area (Meadowlark to Old Church) and my septic system has failed. The septic pumper advises that I need a new septic system and leach field. Must I connect to the sewer system instead?**
- A. Yes. Rather than install a new leach field, you must connect to the sewer system. You will likely have to install a new septic tank as part of the sewer connection, unless the existing septic tank is sound and meets present New Mexico Environment Department regulations.
- Q. I inherited a home on Corrales Road from a family member. Must I connect it to the sewer system?**
- A. No. The transfer of property by inheritance (including a transfer on death deed) does not trigger a requirement to connect to the sewer. However, if you plan to sell the property you inherited and the property is within the Primary Service Area (Meadowlark to Old Church), then it will have to be connected to the sewer system when it is sold.
- Q. I have property near but not on Corrales Road, and my neighbor is willing to grant an easement so I can extend a line to Corrales Road. Can I connect to the sewer system?**
- A. Yes, if there is a connection point available. The system was designed with sufficient connection points to serve all Corrales Road properties, but there may be sufficient connection points to serve additional properties in some areas.

II. COST OF SEWER SERVICE.

Q. What will it cost me to connect to the sewer system?

A. A property owner connecting to the sewer system must pay a connection fee and must also pay the entire cost of installing the connection from the septic tank to the connection point at Corrales Road. If the existing septic tank is not in compliance with New Mexico Environment Department regulations, a new septic tank may also be required. Total cost of the connection will vary depending on many factors, but is generally expected to be in the range of about \$5,000 to \$12,000.

Q. What is the connection fee for residences?

A. The connection fee for single-family residences is \$250 until June 30, 2016, and will be \$500 after that date. Multi-family residential units such as apartments are treated as businesses for purposes of calculating the connection fee and other costs.

Q. What is the connection fee for small businesses?

A. The connection fee for small businesses with a design flow of up to 600 gallons per day is \$1,250 until June 30, 2016; and \$2,500 after June 30, 2016.

Q. What is the connection fee for large businesses?

A. The connection fee for businesses and other facilities with a design flow of more than 600 gallons per day is \$2,500 until June 30th, 2016 and \$5,000 after June 30th, 2016.

Q. If I wait, is it likely that these connection fees will decrease in the future?

A. No; rather, they are likely to increase. For each new connection to the sewer system, Albuquerque imposes a utility expansion charge of \$2,074 or more (depending on flow). The Village can initially impose lower connection fees for many customers because some utility expansion charges were prepaid out of grant funds. After the first one hundred connections are made to the Village sewer system, the Village will have to pay Albuquerque the full utility expansion charge for any new connections thereafter, and will have to recover that cost from its rates and connection fees.

Q. How much must I pay each month for residential sewer service?

A. The monthly rate for single-family residential service is \$30, consisting of a \$10 monthly base charge and a \$20 monthly commodity charge.

Q. Why is the rate divided into a base charge and a commodity charge?

A. In utility ratemaking, rates are typically divided into a base charge, which represents the cost of maintaining the service connection, and a commodity charge, which represents the cost of providing the utility service in the volume required by the customer. As applied to the Village’s sewer system, all customers must pay both the base charge and the commodity charge as long as the service is being used. However, if the service will not be used for an extended period of time (for example, if the building or home is vacant for several months), the owner may request that the commodity charge be waived during that period of non-use. The owner will continue to pay the base charge, however, regardless whether there is actually any flow into the sewer system.

Q. What is the monthly sewer service rate for small businesses?

A. For small businesses with a design flow of no more than 600 gallons per day, the monthly rate is \$80, consisting of a \$30 base charge and a \$50 commodity charge.

Q. What is the monthly sewer service rate for large businesses?

A. The monthly base charge for large businesses and public facilities is \$100. The monthly commodity charge depends on the design flow of the business or facility, as follows:

Design flow	Base charge	Commodity charge
Up to 1,200 gallons per day	\$100.00	\$150.00
1,201 to 2,400 gallons per day	\$100.00	\$275.00
2,401 to 4,800 gallons per day	\$100.00	\$350.00
4,801 gallons per day or more	\$100.00	\$500.00

Q. How does the Village determine the design flow for my business?

A. The design flow for a business or public facility is determined based on engineering estimates of the sewer capacity needed to serve the business or facility. These include a number of factors which depend on the nature of the business. You can find them in the Village’s Ordinance No. 14-09 (available on the Village web site), at Section 23-31(c), or in the New Mexico Administrative Code, Section 20.7.3.201 (Table 201.1). The Village’s application for sewer service, on pages 3 and 4, lists the information most commonly needed for the Village to determine the design flow of your facility.

Q. What if I disagree with the design flow and the commodity charge determined by the Village for my business?

A. If you have a large business or other facility and believe that the calculated design flow reflects a significantly greater volume than the actual flow from your facility, you may

with Village approval install a flow meter on your service connection. The Village will read the flow meter monthly and bill the commodity charge for your facility based on the measured flow. The monthly base charge will not be reduced. This option is not available to small businesses (design flow up to 600 gallons per day) because they are already paying the Village's lowest business rates for sewer service.

III. HOW THE SEWER SYSTEM WORKS.

Q. I have been told that the Village sewer is a "STEP" system. What does that mean?

A. "STEP" stands for "septic tank effluent pumping." This is a sewer system which accepts the effluent from septic tanks and diverts it to a sewage treatment facility, rather than putting it into the soil or groundwater through a leach field.

Q. Why can't the STEP system accept solid materials?

A. The STEP sewer system is a pressurized system designed to transport liquids at relatively low flow rates and discharge volumes. Flow occurs as a result of pressure from STEP pumps in the northern part of the system forcing the water to flow to the single discharge point at the south end. The advantage of this type of system is that it requires only a small pipe and the water under pressure will flow either upgrade or downgrade, so the pipe does not need a continuous downward slope and expensive lift stations at intervals along the pipeline. A disadvantage is that it accepts only liquids—the same materials that will overflow into a leach field from a properly functioning septic tank. Solids and grease tend to clog the system.

Q. How are solids kept out of the sewer system?

A. Most solids will be trapped in the septic tank, from which they will need to be pumped periodically, just as a septic tank in a standard septic system must be pumped to keep solids from overflowing into the leach field. Also, there is a filter in the STEP pump basin to keep solids from possibly damaging the pump, or from passing through the pump into the sewer system. As an additional safeguard, and to minimize the need to remove and clean the filter in the STEP pump basin, the Village recommends that a customer should also install a filter at the outflow port from the septic tank.

Q. May I discharge oil and grease into the sewer system?

A. No. Just like gravity-feed sewer systems, the STEP system is likely to clog if oil or grease is discharged into it. Grease traps may be required for restaurants and other businesses that have significant amounts of oil or grease in their wastewater discharge.

Q. Will the sewer system cause unpleasant odors?

A. There should be no unpleasant odors from the sewer system. As with all sewer systems, there are manholes located at intervals for access to the system. At each of these manholes, there are odor-control canisters containing filters which require periodic replacement. If you notice an odor coming from any manhole, please notify the Village so that the problem can be resolved. Normally, this will simply require replacement of the odor-control filter.

Q. Will the sewer system affect the environment?

A. The sewer system should have a positive effect on the environment by providing for the safe treatment of sewage that would otherwise be discharged to infiltrate into the soil or groundwater. The New Mexico Environment Department believes that the sewer is necessary to avoid excessive discharge of wastewater in the Village's business core, which could cause groundwater contamination.

Q. Does the Village plan to expand the sewer system?

A. The sewer system was designed with sufficient capacity to provide service to some additional areas of the Village that have relatively high population densities. There are no immediate plans for further expansion of the sewer system into those areas.

IV. HOW TO MAKE A CONNECTION TO THE SEWER SYSTEM.

Q. I have decided to connect to the sewer system. What should I do?

A. The Village recommends that you hire a qualified contractor to help you design and construct your sewer connection. The connection will require excavation and installation of pipelines as well as a STEP pump in a pump basin about seven feet deep. There is also an electronic control panel for the pump which must be installed by a licensed electrical contractor.

Q. How do I apply to the Village for sewer service?

A. You or your contractor can obtain an Application for Wastewater Service at the Village offices, 4324 Corrales Road, any time during business hours, or request that one be sent to you by mail or by e-mail. The Village's main phone number is 505-897-0702 and a convenient e-mail address is receptionist@corrales-nm.org. The Village also has on hand a number of materials related to the STEP system and its components that may be of use to you in designing and installing your sewer connection.

Q. Do I need to supply any additional information along with my application for service?

A. Yes. Your completed Application for Wastewater Service should be returned to the Village offices along with the design drawings showing your planned service connection,

the appropriate connection fee, and any other materials that you believe may assist the Village's evaluation of your application. If you plan to use an existing septic tank, you must also supply documentation that it is licensed by the New Mexico Environment Department. If you plan to install a new septic tank, it should be included in your design.

Q. I have an old single-chamber septic tank, installed before two-chambered tanks were required by the Environment Department. Can I use that tank when connecting to the Village sewer?

A. No. The STEP system requires at least a two-chambered septic tank, which is also the minimum number of chambers required for a septic system under present Environment Department regulations. At least a double-chambered septic tank is needed to ensure adequate separation of solids before the wastewater flow reaches the STEP pump.

Q. How do I determine where to connect to the Village's sewer line?

A. You or your contractor should contact the Village Administrator or the Public Works Director to determine the best connection point for your service connection. The Village can provide you a copy of the relevant "as-built" drawing showing the location of the connection point, and a knowledgeable Village representative can meet with you or your contractor on site to ensure that the connection point is properly located.

Q. Do I need a grease trap?

A. Most customers will not need a grease trap. However, restaurants and other facilities with kitchens producing large amounts of food will likely require grease traps to remove grease from the wastewater stream. If you find that your service connection is frequently becoming clogged due to grease collecting on the filters or in other parts of the system, you may need to install a grease trap.

Q. How can I obtain a STEP pump, pump basin and control unit?

A. For start-up purposes, the Village has purchased 100 Orenco Model PF100511 STEP pumps rated at 10 gallons per minute, with pump basins and control units. The Village will make one pump, pump basin and control unit available to an applicant who requests them. Installation of the STEP pump, pump basin and control unit will be your responsibility, but the Village will provide technical advice to the extent reasonably possible, based on the experience of Village personnel in installing these units for the Village's own facilities. After the first 100 STEP pumps, pump basins and control units have been exhausted, the Village may acquire additional units for resale at the Village's cost, or an applicant for sewer service may obtain them directly from a manufacturer or supplier.

Q. Can the STEP pump be installed directly in the septic tank, rather than in a separate pump basin?

A. Yes, if the septic tank is designed to accommodate a STEP pump or can be modified to allow installation of a STEP pump and pump vault within the last chamber of the septic tank. You and your contractor should determine whether this sort of installation might be best for your circumstances.

Q. Will a 10-gallon per minute STEP pump be sufficient for my needs?

A. A 10-gallon per minute STEP pump should be sufficient for most installations. However, large volume commercial customers may find it necessary or desirable to use multiple pumps, or a pump having a larger discharge capacity, to ensure reliability and adequate flow rate. Larger capacity pumps can be obtained from Orenco Systems, Inc. and from other suppliers.

Q. Will the Village supply any components other than a 10-gallon per minute STEP pump, pump basin and control unit?

A. No. All other components of the sewer connection, including a new septic tank if needed and a larger capacity pump if desired, will be the responsibility of the property owner.

Q. Will the Village provide a warranty for the STEP pump and other components provided by the Village?

A. No. The Village cannot provide such a warranty. However, Orenco, the manufacturer of the STEP pumps, has agreed to provide a limited warranty, transferable to a new owner by the Village, for a period of five years after the date the STEP pumps were originally acquired by the Village.

Q. Will the Village supply replacement pumps, parts or equipment?

A. Generally, no. You should plan to obtain replacement pumps, parts or equipment, if needed, from the manufacturer or from local suppliers. However, if the Village has a replacement pump, pump basin or control unit in stock and it is not needed for other installations, the Village may be able to supply it to you at the Village's cost.

Q. What are the electrical requirements of the STEP pump and controller?

A. The Orenco Model PF100511 STEP pump with Simplex control panel available from the Village requires single-phase, 120 volt AC current and draws about 12.7 amperes of current at maximum design flow. You will have to provide electrical power for the STEP pump and controller. For some older homes, this may require wiring for a new circuit and upgrading other parts of the electrical system to provide the necessary amperage. You should consult with your electrical contractor regarding these matters.

Q. How do I make the final connection to the sewer system?

A. At least three days before you anticipate making the final connection to the sewer system, you or your contractor must notify the Village and make arrangements for a Village representative to observe the final connection and open the valve so that your system will operate. At this time, if you have not already done so, you will be asked to sign a standard-form wastewater service agreement with the Village, spelling out the parties' responsibilities for continuing operation of the sewer and the service connection. The Village will begin billing for sewer service when the connection is complete.

Q. What do I need to do to close off the leach field of my old septic system?

A. When you connect to the sewer system, your old leach field must be disconnected from the septic tank and the exit port from the septic tank must be capped (unless it is used for connection to the sewer). The Village will require certification that the leach field has been closed as a condition for Village sewer service.

Q. I have an old, unused cesspool on my property, or I have an old septic tank with a leach field which will not be part of my STEP system connection. What must I do to close these facilities?

A. Old, disused cesspools, septic tanks and leach fields must be closed in accordance with applicable New Mexico Environment Department regulations, and the Village will require certification that they have been closed as a condition for Village sewer service. However, the Village has no regulatory authority over the management and closure of old cesspools, septic tanks and leach fields, which are under the jurisdiction of the New Mexico Environment Department, Environmental Health Bureau, Liquid Waste Program. The phone number of the New Mexico Environment Department's Rio Rancho office is 505-771-5980, and the phone number of its Albuquerque office is 505-222-9500.

V. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE SERVICE CONNECTION.

Q. Who is responsible for operation and maintenance of my service connection?

A. As with most sewer utility systems, you are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the service connection from your building, through the septic tank and the STEP pump to the Village's sewer line at Corrales Road. The Village will not operate or maintain your individual service connection.

Q. What do I need to do to operate and maintain my service connection?

A. In addition to keeping your service connection in good repair and replacing any components that fail, you must periodically clean the system filters and pump the septic tank. Additional maintenance may be required if your connection includes other components such as grease traps, which may be required for restaurants and other places where food is prepared to prevent excess grease from entering the sewer.

Q. How often must the filters be cleaned?

A. That will depend on the volume of wastewater passing through the system and the amount of solids and semi-solids in the wastewater. Some users may find that the filters need to be cleaned as frequently as monthly. If the filters require cleaning more frequently than monthly, that may be an indication that the septic tank needs to be pumped, that you need to install a grease trap on the system, or that some other problem with the service connection needs to be corrected.

Q. How do I clean the filters?

A. The cylindrical filter in the STEP pump basin should be removed, rinsed with clean water, and then replaced into the basin. Filters in general should be removed and cleaned in accordance with the recommendations of the manufacturer or the installer.

Q. How should I dispose of wash water when I clean the filters?

A. The wash water should be disposed of in a safe and convenient location where it will not cause an odor problem. One suggestion is to collect the wash water and dump it into the top port of the first chamber of your septic tank, or open the port of the septic tank and hold the filter over the port while cleaning it with a hose.

Q. How often must the septic tank be pumped?

A. The septic tank must be pumped often enough to avoid solids rising to the level of the exit port and flowing toward the STEP pump basin. The frequency of pumping will depend on the volume of wastewater passing through the system and the amount of solids and semi-solids in the wastewater, as well as the capacity of the septic tank. It is generally recommended that household septic tanks be pumped at least once every three years. Septic tanks for large-volume commercial establishments will likely require pumping more frequently.

Q. What should I do if the alarm sounds on my STEP system control unit?

A. The STEP pump manufacturer recommends that if the alarm sounds once you may wish to press the “Push to Silence” button to see if the alarm reflects a temporary condition that has resolved itself. If the alarm sounds again, you must determine the source of the problem and correct it. The Orenco chart “Control Panel Troubleshooting,” copies of which are available from the Village, may be of use to you. It lists a number of possible conditions that can trigger either a high-level alarm or a low-level alarm. You may need to contact a qualified plumber or other contractor to help you locate and correct the problem that is causing the alarm.

VI. HOW TO GET FURTHER INFORMATION.

Q. Who can I contact for more information about the Village's sewer system?

A. The Village's sewer system is operated by the Public Works Department under the general supervision of the Village Administrator. To contact either the Village Administrator or the Director of the Public Works Department, call the Village offices at 505-897-0502. You may also visit the Village offices at 4324 Corrales Road, Corrales, NM 87048, to obtain technical information and publications relating to the Village's sewer system, STEP systems in general, and STEP system components such as pumps and pump control units.

Q. Who do I contact for information on New Mexico Environment Department policies and regulations?

A. Individual wastewater disposal systems, including septic tanks and associated leach fields, are regulated by the New Mexico Environment Department's Environmental Health Bureau, Liquid Waste Program. The Environment Department has a local field office at 4359 Jager Drive N.E., Suite B, Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87144; telephone 505-771-5980. The Environment Department's Albuquerque office is located at 5500 San Antonio Drive, N.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109; telephone 505-222-9500.

Q. I need technical information or advice regarding the Orenco STEP pump that I acquired from the Village. Who do I call?

A. The Village cannot repair or replace your pump for you, but you are welcome to contact the Public Works Department (505-897-0502) for any advice or suggestions that Village staff may be able to provide based on their experience with the equipment. For more comprehensive information regarding Orenco products, the Village recommends that you visit the Orenco web site, www.orencocom.com, or call 800-348-9843 or 541-459-4449.