

the result by 30. This will give you a result in metres.

Example

A discharge of 1.2 cubic metres divided by 0.75 gives 1.6, which multiplied by 30 gives a result of 48 metres.

You cannot meet the general binding rules if any boundary of the premises that your system serves is within that distance of a public foul sewer.

If your discharge is in a sewered area

Check what you need to do if your discharge is in a sewered area (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/discharges-to-surface-water-and-groundwater-environmental-permits#discharges-in-sewered-areas>).

If there's no public foul sewer and a discharge can negatively affect the property or environment, check if your sewerage undertaker has a duty to build and pay for a new sewer for you to connect to. This is known as first time sewerage (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/discharges-to-surface-water-and-groundwater-environmental-permits#building-and-paying-for-a-new-sewer>).

Get building regulations and planning approval

You must have building regulations approval (<https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval/when-you-need-approval>) if you have or are planning to install a new septic tank or small sewage treatment plant. You may also need planning permission (<https://www.gov.uk/planning-permission-england-wales>).

Make sure the discharge point is not in or near protected sites

You cannot meet the general binding rules if the discharge will be in an ancient woodland or in or within 50 metres of any:

- special areas of conservation
- special protection areas
- Ramsar wetland sites
- biological sites of special scientific interest (SSSI)

If you have or are planning to start a discharge to ground in or near a protected site, you must connect to the public foul sewer when it's reasonable (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/discharges-to-surface-water-and-groundwater-environmental-permits#discharges-in-sewered-areas>) to do so. You

must apply for a permit (<https://www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/apply-for-a-permit>) if it's not.

How to check the locations of protected sites

You can use Magic map (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/home.htm>) to identify the locations of these sites.

1. Search for the discharge site location.
2. In the table of contents, open 'Designations', then 'Land-Based Designations', then 'Statutory'. Select 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)', 'Special Protection Areas (England)', 'Special Areas of Conservation (England)' and 'Ramsar Sites (England)'.
3. In the table of contents, open 'Habitats and Species', then 'Habitats', then 'Woodland' option. Select 'Ancient Woodland (England)'.
4. To measure the distance from the discharge site to any protected sites, select the 'Measure' tool from the menu then use the 'Distance' option.
5. To find out if a site is a biological SSSI, select the 'Identify' tool from the menu, then select the protected site on the map. Open the site detail link to read the description.

If you cannot use Magic map, contact the Environment Agency (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-permit-pre-application-advice-form>) to request a nature and heritage conservation screening.

Additional rules for new discharges started on or after 2 October 2023

Make sure your new discharge does not use the same discharge point as any other discharge if the combined volume would exceed the general binding rule limit

A new discharge must not use the same outlet as any other discharge if the combined volume is greater than 2 cubic metres (2,000 litres) a day to ground. You must have a permit for the new discharge if the combined volume of the new and existing discharges is above this limit.

Make sure your new discharge is not within 50 metres of any other exempt small sewage discharge

Ask your neighbours if their foul drainage solution discharges under the general binding rules. If so, ask how far their discharge is from your discharge location.

You must have a permit for the new discharge if it's within 50 metres of any other system that discharges under the general binding rules.

Get help following the rules

You should get advice from a competent service engineer if you need help understanding:

- what treatment system you have
- where your treatment system discharges
- what you must do to meet the general binding rules

British Water provides a [list of accredited service engineers](https://www.britishwater.co.uk/page/ListofAccreditedServiceTechnicians) (<https://www.britishwater.co.uk/page/ListofAccreditedServiceTechnicians>). There may be other competent service engineers.

If you cannot meet all of the rules that apply to you

You must either:

- connect to a public foul sewer – contact [your sewerage undertaker](https://www.water.org.uk/customers/find-your-supplier) (<https://www.water.org.uk/customers/find-your-supplier>) for advice
- change your treatment system so that it can meet the general binding rules

Otherwise, you must [apply for a permit](https://www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/apply-for-a-permit) (<https://www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/apply-for-a-permit>).

In your permit application you must justify why it's not reasonable to connect to a public foul sewer. The Environment Agency will then assess the risk of using your system at your location.

Enforcement

If your discharge causes pollution you may be committing an offence. The Environment Agency will give you advice to help you fix the problem. If your discharge continues to cause pollution the Environment Agency may take [enforcement action](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-agency-enforcement-and-sanctions-policy) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-agency-enforcement-and-sanctions-policy>) against you.

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