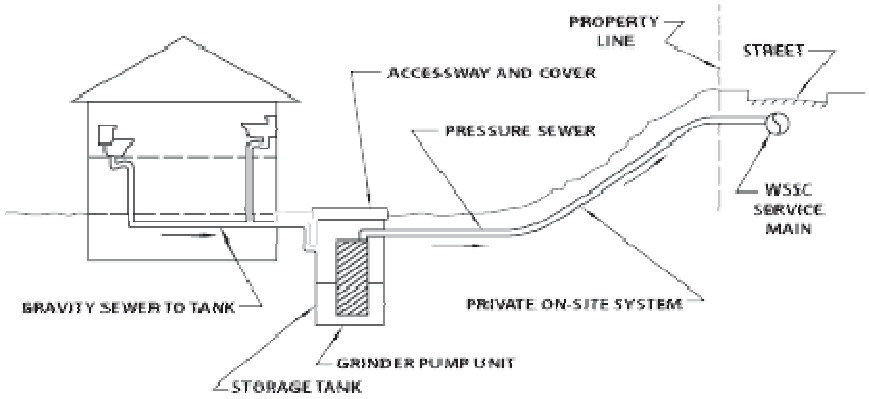
Frequently Asked Questions and Answers about Grinder Pumps

1. What is a grinder pump?

A grinder pump works like a household garbage disposal, but on a larger scale. It grinds up wastewater produced in your home (i.e. toilet use, shower, washing machine, etc.) and pumps it into the public sewer system.

2. How does it work?

A grinder pump is placed in a tank (or well) that is buried in a convenient outdoor location on a homeowner's property. The tank provides wastewater holding storage capacity. When water is used in the house, wastewater flows into the tank. When the wastewater in the tank reaches a pre-set level, the grinder pump automatically turns on, grinds the waste, and pumps it out of the tank via the homeowner's on-site sewer service line and into the public sewer system. A grinder pump will normally run for one or two minutes and automatically turn off when the tank is emptied. The pump is powered by electricity and is connected to a control panel near your electric meter.



3. Who is responsible for the grinder pump?

Grinder pumps are the responsibility of the Utility. However, customers can be charged if the pump is damaged because of improper use by the owner, tenant, guest, etc.

4. What can I do to protect my grinder pump?

A properly maintained grinder pump should be able to handle wastewater from the kitchen, bathroom, laundry, etc. However, some chemicals and substances can adversely impact a grinder pump and may cause safety hazards. Please check the labels on all chemicals before using / disposing. Also, never pour the following items down drains or flush down toilets:

- Grease (a byproduct of cooking that comes from meat fats, oils, shortening, butter, margarine, food scraps, sauces and dairy products);
- Explosive or flammable material;
- Kitty litter;
- Aquarium gravel;
- Strong chemicals or toxic, caustic or poisonous substances;
- Degreasing solvents;
- Diapers, feminine products, or cloth of any kind;
- Fuel or lubricating oil, paint thinner of antifreeze;
- Plastic objects; and
- Seafood shells.

These items can damage the grinder pump and its controls, cause blockages and backups and may create unsafe conditions in your lines and tank. Also, never connect a sump pump to sewer lines. Doing so is a violation of the plumbing code and decreases the sewer mains' flow capacity while increasing wastewater treatment costs. In the case of a grinder pump, a sump pump connected to the sewer system may increase your electric rates and shorten the life of your grinder pump.

5. What should I do with my pump when I go on vacation?

If you plan on being away for several days, replace the wastewater in the tank with clean water to help minimize odors. To do this, run an inside faucet for about 10 minutes – long enough for the grinder pump to start working (you may need to go outside near the pump and listen to verify it has started). After the pump starts, turn the inside faucet off. The pump will run until the tank is empty and shut off automatically. This process will cleanse the pump and keep it filled with a minimum amount of clean water. Remember to always leave the power to the pump on.

6. Power Failure/Reserve Capacity

If there is a power failure that affects your home, your grinder pump will also experience a loss of power and not be able to operate. The grinder pump tank has a certain amount of holding capacity, but interior water use should be severely limited until power has been restored

7. Electricity/Energy Consumption

Typical annual energy consumption equals a 40-watt light bulb. The grinder pump normally will run for one or two minutes and will automatically turn off when the tank has been emptied. The pump is programmed to operate in cycles rather than continuously. Cycles are determined by the amount of water used, usually after 20 gallons has entered the tank. During a usual day, the grinder pump will turn on and off to empty the tank 20 to 30 times.