



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Department Name:** Planning & Development  
**Department No.:** 053  
**For Agenda Of:** July 19, 2016  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimated Time:**  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Department Glenn Russell, Ph.D. (805)568-2085  
Director(s)  
Contact Info: Massoud Abolhoda, S.E., (805) 568-3120

**SUBJECT:** Graywater Systems

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence: **Environmental Health, Public Health**

**Department**

As to form: Yes

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file a report regarding graywater systems exempted from construction permits; and
- b) Determine that the above action does not constitute a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(2) and 15378(b)(5).

**Summary Text:**

This report is presented to your Board to provide you with information regarding new procedures for graywater systems that have been developed in collaboration with Environmental Health Services and local water purveyors.

California Health and Safety Code section 17922.12 defines graywater as "*untreated wastewater that has not been contaminated by any toilet discharge, has not been affected by infectious, contaminated, or unhealthy bodily wastes, and does not present a threat from contamination by unhealthful processing, manufacturing, or operating wastes.*" Graywater systems are designed to collect graywater to be treated on-site for reuse or distribution to an irrigation or disposal field. Depending on the complexity of the system, graywater systems may include various equipment, valves, tanks, filters, pumps, and other appurtenances.

The 2013 California Plumbing Code (adopted and incorporated into Santa Barbara County Code, Chapter 10, Building Regulations) establishes minimum requirements for the installation of graywater systems in residential buildings. Although graywater systems typically require construction permits, these systems may be exempted from the permit requirement if an enforcing agency consults with the water purveyor and obtains the purveyor's concurrence regarding the exemption process (California Plumbing Code section 1602.1.2(2) and section 1602.1.3(2)). As the County enforcing agency, the Building and Safety Division has reached out to and consulted with water purveyors to exempt limited types of graywater systems in the unincorporated areas of the County from construction permits. Installation of exempt graywater systems must still adhere to minimum standards outlined in the Plumbing Code and non-compliant systems are subject to enforcement actions (California Plumbing Code section 1602.1(G)).

### **Background:**

Chapter 16 of the California Plumbing Code establishes minimum requirements for the installation of graywater systems in residential buildings. "Graywater" includes, but is not limited to, wastewater from bathtubs, showers, bathroom washbasins, clothes washing machines, and laundry tubs. "Graywater" does not include wastewater from toilets, kitchen sinks or dishwashers.

The intent of this chapter of the Plumbing Code is to (1) conserve water by facilitating greater reuse of laundry, shower, lavatory, and similar sources of discharge for irrigation and/or indoor use; (2) reduce the number of non-compliant graywater systems by making legal compliance easily achievable; (3) provide guidance for proper installation; and (4) provide an alternative way to relieve stress on sewage disposal systems by diverting graywater.

Santa Barbara County is suffering from a historic drought. Rainfall has been significantly below the amount necessary to fill our reservoir systems and groundwater basins. The Governor of California has issued multiple Executive Orders mandating strict water conservation goals and promoting the use of technologies that will provide drought relief. Graywater systems could provide much needed support in our efforts to conserve valuable water resources. Statistics available suggest that an average household generates approximately 50-60 gallons of graywater per day. Assuming water savings of approximately 40-50%, graywater systems could have the potential to generate 20-30 gallons of reusable graywater per day per household. Such savings could greatly enhance water conservation if these systems are widely installed throughout the County.

In an effort to reduce strains on precious water resources and to promulgate the use of graywater systems in Santa Barbara County, Building and Safety staff began discussing the possibility of exempting certain types of graywater systems as provided under the California Plumbing Code. After discussion and consultation with Environmental Health Services, the Carpinteria Valley, Goleta, Montecito Water Districts and San Marcos Mutual Water Company have opted to exempt simple graywater systems as described below.

A simple system is defined as a system that discharges less than 250 gallons per day. The Building and Safety exemption for simple graywater systems is only applicable to gravity-fed systems. Untreated gray water may only be discharged to a subsoil irrigation system, disposal field or mulch basin.

Graywater shall not be used to irrigate root crops or food crops intended for human consumption which come in contact with the soil.

As stated previously, these exemptions are currently available in unincorporated areas within the Carpinteria Valley, Goleta, Montecito Water Districts and San Marcos Mutual Water Company because these districts have authorized the exemption as required by the California Plumbing Code. The exemption also applies to properties that provide their own water via a well, etc. Building and Safety staff will continue outreach to other water purveyors within the County and will provide exemptions where appropriate. Additionally, Building and Safety staff will provide informational bulletins at our counters and on our website, <http://www.sbcountyplanning.org/pdf/misc/SBcountySimpleGWSystemBrochure-J.PDF> regarding graywater system installation requirements (**Attachment A**).

**Performance Measure:**

N/A

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Select\_Budgeted

**Fiscal Analysis:** Exemption of these graywater systems has very minor fiscal impact due to the minimal number of permit applications submitted for these systems. The cost to prepare this report is funded in the Planning and Development adopted Fiscal Year 2015-17 budget on page D-289.

**Staffing Impacts:**

**Legal Positions:**  
0

**FTEs:**  
0

Attachment:

- A. Graywater Brochure

**Authored by:**

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**CC:**

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Larry Fay, Environmental Health Services