



STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Environment Department

SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR

David Martin, *Cabinet Secretary*

Raj Solomon, P.E., *Deputy Secretary*

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Jill Turner, Communications Coordinator (505) 222-9548 / jill.turner@state.nm.us

Safety Advisory for Illegal & Substandard Liquid Waste Systems

Cesspools and substandard septic tanks are illegal and dangerous. Rural homeowners are reminded by the New Mexico Environment Department to protect their families by making sure their onsite wastewater systems comply with state law.

“In addition to polluting groundwater, cesspools can pose hazards of entrapment, asphyxiation and drowning, especially to young children,” said Environment Secretary Dave Martin.

“Tragically, several New Mexicans have fallen into substandard onsite wastewater systems and perished.”

Using a cesspool to dispose of sewage is a crime punishable by a fine of up to \$500 or a jail sentence of up to 6 months or both. “If you own property with a cesspool,” Secretary Martin states, “call us, report it, apply for a permit to replace it with a modern septic system, and you will not be prosecuted.”

Financial assistance also may be available to assist low-income households install a modern septic system.

A bilingual Fact Sheet on cesspools and substandard septic systems is available on the department’s website at:

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/LiquidWaste/documents/Cesspools.pdf>.

Homeowners also may contact their local Environment Department Field Office or call 1-800-219-6157.

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