

Drainfields

Whether it is a trench or a bed, the drainfield should not be constructed when the soil is near or wetter than its optimum moisture (IDAPA 58.01.03.008.06). At optimum moisture, a soil will compact to its maximum ability and thus reduce its capability to transmit water. This ability to compact and restrict flow is particularly true of finer soils, such as silt loams and clay loams. It is not as critical in sands or sandy loams.

If it is entirely unavoidable to excavate the drainfield when the soil is drier than optimum, then the sides and bottom should be raked to relieve any compaction. Backhoe buckets and teeth can effectively smear both trench sidewalls and trench bottoms. Therefore, raking should be done manually with a strong iron garden rake after all excavation with a backhoe is complete and before the drainrock is put in place.

Drainrock should be checked for cleanliness before it is placed in the trenches. Long transportation time may generate additional fines. If drainrock is found to be unsuitably dirty when it arrives at the site, it can often be cleaned in the truck by tipping the truck bed slightly and washing the rock with a strong stream of water.

Trenches do not have to be constructed straight. It is always preferable to follow the contour of the land. The drainfield must not be installed in floodways, at slope bases, in concave slopes, or depressions. Drainfield areas shall be constructed to allow for surface drainage and to prevent ponding of water over the drainfield.

Table 3-2 gives the lengths of trenches in the seven soil subgroups (A-2 has two application rates; see section 2.3, Table 2-10).

Drainfields larger than 1,500 ft² trench area bottom are prohibited from being constructed as a standard (gravity) drainfield (IDAPA 58.01.03.008.04). Drainfields exceeding 1,500 ft² in total trench bottom area must be pressure-dosed (section 4.20).

Table 3-2. Area requirements and total trench lengths for standard subsurface sewage disposal systems.

Number of Bedrooms	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gallons per day	150	200	250	300	350	400
Total Trench Lengths (feet)						
<i>Soil Group A-1 total feet</i>	125	167	208	250	292	333
3-ft wide trench	42	56	69	83	97	111
2.5-ft wide trench	50	67	83	100	117	133
2-ft wide trench	63	83	104	125	146	167
<i>Soil Group A-2a total feet</i>	150	200	250	300	350	400
3-ft wide trench	50	67	83	100	117	133
2.5-ft wide trench	60	80	100	120	140	160
2-ft wide trench	75	100	125	150	175	200
<i>Soil Group A-2b total feet</i>	200	267	333	400	467	533
3-ft wide trench	67	89	111	133	156	178
2.5-ft wide trench	80	107	133	160	187	213
2-ft wide trench	100	133	167	200	233	267
<i>Soil Group B-1 total feet</i>	250	333	417	500	583	667
3-ft wide trench	83	111	139	167	194	222
2.5-ft wide trench	100	133	167	200	233	267
2-ft wide trench	125	167	208	250	292	333
<i>Soil Group B-2 total feet</i>	333	444	556	667	778	889
3-ft wide trench	111	148	185	222	259	296
2.5-ft wide trench	133	178	222	267	311	356
2-ft wide trench	167	222	278	333	389	444
<i>Soil Group C-1 total feet</i>	500	667	833	1,000	1,167	1,333
3-ft wide trench	167	222	278	333	389	444
2.5-ft wide trench	200	267	333	400	467	a
2-ft wide trench	250	333	417	500	a	a
<i>Soil Group C-2 total feet</i>	750	1,000	1,250	1,500	1,750	2,000
3-ft wide trench	250	333	417	500	a	a
2.5-ft wide trench	300	400	500	a	a	a
2-ft wide trench	375	500	a	a	a	a

a. Exceeds 500 feet of trench length or 1,500 feet of total trench area. Use an alternative system or request a variance.