

“Follow Manufacturers Recommendations”

By David L. Marceau

Did you ever wonder what this phrase really means? Of course I understand that the manufacturers of the products that we utilize for our designs have specifications for what they want, but what does that really mean? Must every recommendation be in writing? Is the products design manual the manufacturers recommendations? As you might imagine a good portion of any site evaluator’s concerns come down to liability.

This issue has become more important in my world because I recently have assisted an engineer in designing an engineered septic system. In this process, basically the engineer is required to determine whether the components were correctly installed and will function as designed. This is where the manufactures recommendations come in to play because the subsurface rules state that designs must follow “manufacturer’s recommendations” (Appendix B section B-100.2.7 Condition 7). So, if the manufacturer recommends serial distribution and you have say 15 rows do you feed every other row? Every third row? How many rows are too many? Does it matter that we are feeding them all from one end or must we feed from many different areas if the rows are long (80 to 100 feet)? Bear in mind that mounding analysis and transmission analysis are satisfactory no matter what we do.

Taking this issue to other designs, what happens if you design a system with Geo-Flow and the contractor decides to install Enviro-Septic? Where does that leave the site evaluator regarding manufacturer’s recommendations? This may not seem like a big deal but I can tell you that the specifications for each of the units do vary significantly. For example if you are pumping to an Enviro-Septic system the manufacturer requires that two vents be installed, one at the d-box and one at the lower end of the system with a minimum of a 10 foot difference between the height of the upper and lower vents. How do you think most home owners or contractors will accept some type of vent structure protruding 8 feet out of the ground? These requirements do not exist if you choose to use Geo-Flow.

Another example is with pumping and Eljen In-drain systems. The manufacturer’s requires an oversized distribution box and no equalizers on the outlets. They further explain that the doses for pump systems should be 30-60 gallons per dose and design for 5-6 doses per day. If we as site evaluators are not specifying these on our designs are we not following manufacturer’s recommendations? I don’t see many other designs by other site evaluators, but I can tell you that I have seen enough to know that most, if not all, designs do not include this kind of detail.

In these days of extremely valuable lots and lawyers to back them up I, for one, am uneasy about some of the issues facing site evaluators these days. What do you think?