

**Sewage Tunnel Works**  
**Sewage Tunnels (Statutory Easements) Ordinance**  
**Section 17A and Scheduled Area Number 5,**  
**Buildings Ordinance, Cap 123**

The Sewage Tunnels (Statutory Easements) Ordinance [ST(SE)O] gazetted on 5 November 1993 provides inter alia for the creation of statutory easements and other rights over land in connection with sewage tunnels. For building works, the consequential amendment, viz. the new section 17A of the Buildings Ordinance, is relevant.

2. Under section 4 of the ST(SE)O, the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands may cause to be published in the Gazette plans showing the route of sewage tunnels and the land situated on the route over which easements and rights may be created. Such plans are deposited in the Land Registry. Copies of these plans are also available for inspection in the Buildings Department and the Drainage Services Department (DSD).

3. The recently enacted Buildings (Amendment) Ordinance 1995 has added to the Fifth Schedule of the Ordinance the sewage tunnel protection areas as **Scheduled Area No. 5**. These areas are the areas delineated and shown edged black on the seven plans numbered KCE/S/G/765A to 771A, dated 11 November 1994, signed by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands and deposited in the Land Registry.

4. With effect from 1 March 1995, all ground investigations in these areas will become building works as defined under section 2 of the Buildings Ordinance and be subject to the control under Part II of the Ordinance.

5. Proposals for building works on land situated on and in the vicinity of a route of a sewage tunnel are subject to section 17A of the Buildings Ordinance. This empowers the Building Authority to refuse approval of, or impose conditions on, proposals found to be incompatible with sewage tunnel works gazetted under section 4 of the ST(SE)O.

6. Sewage tunnels are constructed at great depths so as to minimize adverse effect on building development on the land above : a minimum cover of 30 m of bedrock will normally be allowed. In the interest of public safety, however, it is still necessary for relevant technical requirements to be met to avoid incompatibility between any building works (especially foundation works) and sewage tunnel works. For this purpose, the technical notes appended have been prepared by DSD.

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7. Plans submitted to the Buildings Department for proposed building works within 100 meters from the centreline of the gazetted route of sewage tunnels or for ground investigation works within Scheduled Area No. 5 will be circulated to DSD under the system for centralised processing of building plans. The procedures of the system will be followed.

8. The ST(SE)O also contains provisions for compensation. Please direct enquiries on this and related matters to the Director of Lands.

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Sewage tunnels

**Technical Notes for Guidance in Assessing  
the Effects of Civil Engineering Works/Building Development  
on Sewage Tunnels Works**

These technical notes apply to building works on lands situated on or adjacent to the alignment of sewage tunnels.

**A. General**

2. "Sewage tunnel" means an underground tunnel and associated underground structures for the transfer of sewage. A shaft connecting to a sewage tunnel is part of the sewage tunnel. For the application of these guidelines, the extent of sewage tunnels is defined by the route and minimum depth as shown on the gazetted sewage tunnel plan. The extent of a shaft is the external diameter in soil and the internal diameter plus 5 metres in rock. The Director of Drainage Services should be consulted if there is any query concerning the route and extent of sewage tunnels.

3. Shafts of sewage tunnels are located within Drainage Services Department sites. Tunnels to be constructed between these shafts are generally deep with at least 30 metres of rock cover. Most of the construction works on ground surface will not have any significant effect on sewage tunnels and no restrictions on these works will be necessary.

4. The main risks of damage to sewage tunnels arise from either site formation or foundation works constructed immediately adjacent to shaft sites or from boreholes, wells, shafts, tunnels, grouting or other deep works constructed close to sewage tunnels. There is also a risk from ground investigation works for a project requiring deep boreholes to be drilled into the rock.

5. For the purposes of these notes the term "rock" is defined as Grades I, II and III according to Table 4 - Classification of rock Material Decomposition Grades - in Geoguide 3 (Guide to rock and soil descriptions) published by the Geotechnical Engineering Office. The term "soil" is defined as Grades IV, V and VI, also defined in Geoguide 3, reclamation materials, and marine and alluvial deposits.

6. Leakage of sewage and the migration of gas from sewage tunnels poses health and safety risks. These risks must be evaluated when considering any proposed works near sewage tunnels, especially in respect of any dewatering works where there is the potential for the migration of methane in solution in the groundwater.

7. All proposals for new building works within 100 metres from the centreline of the gazetted route of sewage tunnels shall be subject to special scrutiny by Government. Each proposal shall be treated on its individual technical merits and subject to the requirements of the following technical guidelines.

## **B. Site Formation or Foundation Works**

8. Where site formation, foundation works or excavation for basements, shafts, tunnels and such like are proposed above or adjacent to sewage tunnels, the effects of such works shall be within the following limits :

- (a) The vertical or horizontal pressure on any sewage tunnel structure in soil due to the above operations (including filling and dewatering) and due to additional loads transmitted from foundations (including loads arising during construction) shall not be varied by more than 20kPa. or by 5% of the total overburden pressure for structures at depths greater than 20m. For sewage tunnel structures in rock, where it is not possible to assess the change in ground pressure due to the above operations, the hydrostatic pressure shall not be increased or decreased by more than 50kPa.
- (b) Differential movement resulting from the works shall not produce a calculated final diametric distortion exceeding 0.1% of the shaft or sewage tunnel internal diameter and the calculated total movement in any plane shall not exceed 20mm.
- (c) The peak particle velocities at any sewage tunnel structures resulting from blasting (where permitted) or from driving or withdrawing of piles or any operation which can induce prolonged vibration shall not exceed 25mm/sec for blasting and 15mm/sec for other operations.
- (d) No holes or excavations shall be sunk or excavated within a distance of 3m from any point of any sewage tunnel structure without prior approval by the Building Authority for the works and the method to be employed.
- (e) No pile, foundation or well shall be driven or constructed within a distance of 3m in any plane of any point of any sewage tunnel structure.
- (f) Any part of a ground anchor shall be more than 3m from any part of any sewage tunnel structure.

9. Proposals for monitoring the effects on sewage tunnels shall be submitted to the Building Authority before works commence and subsequent data shall be submitted to the Building Authority for the duration of the works.

### **C. Ground Investigation Works**

10. Where ground investigations are proposed within Scheduled Area No. 5, it is necessary for the following to be submitted to the Building Authority :

- (a) details of the exploration and locations of the proposed exploration holes, field testing or instrumentations relative to sewage tunnels;
- (b) proposed depth of holes, field testing or instrumentation;
- (c) a method statement for sinking holes, conducting field testings or installing instrumentation; and
- (d) a method statement for checking the alignment of holes when the minimum distance from a hole to any point of a sewage tunnel is less than 50m should holes be sunk to a depth within 3m from the highest point of the sewage tunnels.

11. Any proposal will also be judged against the following technical guidelines :

- (a) The vertical and horizontal pressure on any sewage tunnel structure in soil due to site investigation works including field testing such as plate load test, pressuremeter test, packer test or any operation should not be increased or decreased by more than 20kPa or by 5% of the total overburden pressure for structures at depths greater than 20m.
- (b) The peak particle velocities at any sewage tunnel structure resulting from --
  - (i) artificial shocks generated either by the detonation of explosives or a mechanical blow at ground surface or at depth within a hole should not exceed 25mm/sec; and
  - (ii) percussion drilling, hammer drilling or any operation which can induce prolonged vibration, should not exceed 15mm/sec.
- (c) No holes should be sunk or excavated within a distance of 3m from any point of any sewage tunnel.

### **D. Dewatering Works and Wells**

12. Assessment shall be made regarding the leakage of sewage and the migration of gas in respect of all dewatering and well proposals within 100 metres of sewage tunnels. Monitoring proposals shall be submitted to the Building Authority with an agreed programme for the duration of the dewatering or extraction.