

Glossary



Activated sludge a mixture of micro-organisms and wastewater. Air is bubbled through it which, in the right conditions, allows the micro-organisms to feed on the wastewater and make it cleaner by feeding on harmful elements

Aquifer a layer of permeable rock under the ground which can hold water in cracks and pores

Biodegradable able to be decomposed by bacteria

Biological filter bed circular tanks containing stones on which micro-organisms live and feed on the harmful elements in wastewater

Biosolids treated and dried sewage sludge sold as an agricultural fertiliser

Borehole a hole which is drilled down into an aquifer to bring water to the surface for treatment

Chlorine a gas which is added to domestic water supplies to kill bacteria

Cholera infectious water-borne disease

Condensation the changing of a gas to a liquid

Dehydration when you lose lots of water from your body, for example through sweating

Digester the place where sewage sludge is treated to form biosolids

Disinfection a process by which harmful bacteria are killed off

Dissolve the way in which some solids break down in a liquid and become part of a solution

Drought a long period of time when there is little or no rain

Effluent wastewater which has been treated and cleaned and can now be returned to the watercourse

Evaporation the process by which a liquid changes to a gas or vapour

Filtration the removal of particles from a liquid by passing it through different materials

Impermeable waterproof – not permitting liquid to pass through

Microbe a name for any organism so small that it can only be seen through a microscope

Permeable any material that allows water to penetrate through

Pollution the fouling or contamination of a natural environment, such as water, by harmful waste products

Precipitation water falling to Earth as rain, snow or hail

Pumping station a building which houses a pump which raises the level of the wastewater so that it can flow by gravity towards the wastewater treatment works

Purify to clean water to make it fit for its intended purpose

Reservoir a man-made lake which holds water, collected from rivers, before it is treated and supplied to customers. Reservoirs can help with water purification, as the water stays in them a long time

Sanitation equipment and systems that keep places clean, for example a toilet

Settlement tank a conical tank which is used during wastewater treatment to remove some of the solid waste which settles to the bottom and is siphoned out periodically

Sewage liquid waste containing food, human waste, cleaning products, etc

Sewer a pipe which carries dirty water away from a customer's property and to a wastewater treatment works

Spring a natural flow of water from underground to the Earth's surface

Vapour the gaseous form of a substance that is normally a liquid, for example water vapour

Wastewater liquid waste containing food, human waste, cleaning products, etc

Water company a company whose main job is to provide clean water and to deal with sewage

Water cycle a never-ending cycle by which water passes from the oceans to the clouds, back to Earth and into the oceans again