

What is BRE 365 and how does it affect me?

The BRE (Building Research Establishment) is an independent, research-based consultancy, testing organisation, operating in the built environment and associated industries.

BRE Digest 365 'Soakaway design' was first published in 1991. The latest edition, published in 2016 replaces the previous 2007 edition. It is one of the most common BRE publications and provides guidance for designers to support their applications.

Digest 365 describes the processes for the design and construction of soakaways and explains how to calculate rainfall design values and soil infiltration rates. It also provides information about maintenance, inspection and monitoring, provides design examples and lists sources of further information.

Soakaways have been the traditional way to dispose of stormwater from buildings and paved areas remote from a public sewer or watercourse. In recent years, soakaways have been used within urban, fully-sewered areas to limit the impact on existing sewer systems and to avoid costly upgrades outside the development. Soakaways are seen increasingly as a more widely applicable option alongside other means of stormwater control and disposal.

Soakaways must store the immediate stormwater run-off and allow for its efficient infiltration into the adjacent soil. They must discharge their stored water sufficiently quickly to provide the necessary capacity to receive run-off from a subsequent storm. The time taken for discharge depends upon the soakaway shape and size, and the surrounding soil's infiltration characteristics.

They can be constructed in many different forms and from a range of materials. This Digest describes design and construction procedures, explains how to calculate rainfall design values and soil infiltration rates, and gives design examples.

Whilst compliance with BRE 365 is something that has always technically been a requirement, we have recently been seeing more rigorous policing of this element than ever before. BRE 365 has even started to crop up as a planning condition as well as a Building Regulation Condition. In both instances, its not longer acceptable to just allow for a soakaway as part of the proposals. In order to sign off either condition it now requires a drainage consultant to be appointed in order to carry out various percolation tests on the ground illustrating the existing on-site water run off and concluding in a calculation for the soakaway size required in order to comply with BRE 365.

This is not something to be overlooked and needs to be accounted for as part of the project planning. We've seen far too often that the required soakaway hasn't been allowed for and ultimately ends up being a costly addition to the project.