
**INSPECTION AND EVALUATION OF ONSITE SEWAGE SYSTEMS
FOR PROPERTY CONVEYANCE**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- What is the requirement?
All developed property that utilizes an onsite sewage system (i.e., “septic system”) are required to have the system inspected and evaluated through the Kitsap County Health District prior to conveying the property to a new owner (Kitsap County Board of Health Ordinance 2008-01, Section 13.D.). Developed property in which the house or business has never been occupied is exempt from this requirement.
- Why is it required?
State Health rules (Chapter 246-272A WAC) require the local health jurisdiction to ensure that all owners of onsite sewage systems have their system inspected and evaluated on a regular basis, and prescribe an inspection at the time of property transfer as one of the options to attain these inspections. These rules require that standard gravity systems must be inspected at least once every 3 years, and alternative (i.e., advanced treatment) systems must be inspected at least once a year. While there is a program in-place to ensure the inspection of the 7,000 alternative systems in Kitsap County, there was no program to ensure the evaluation of these systems, or the inspection and evaluation of the 50,000 standard systems.

Through a series of public meetings and discussions between late 2006 and early 2008, the property conveyance inspection program was determined to be the lowest-impact/lowest-cost alternative to meet these state requirements.
- When is this regulation effective?
September 1, 2008.
- Who is responsible to comply with this requirement?
The owner of the property (i.e., the seller) is responsible to ensure that the inspection and evaluation of the onsite sewage system is completed. However, the owner may work with their real estate agent, authorized agent, or buyer to meet this requirement.
- If my property was listed for sale prior to September 1, 2008, am I required to comply with this inspection and evaluation requirement?
Generally, no. Although the Health District strongly encourages all buyers to require an evaluation of the onsite sewage system prior to purchasing the property (for their own knowledge and protection), only those properties listed or relisted (due to the cancellation or expiration of an existing listing) after September 1, 2008 are required to comply with this rule.

- Is this the same thing as a "health letter"?
Yes. This is essentially the same service that the Health District has provided for over 20 years --- except now the "service" is a requirement.
- Will the Health District prevent or prohibit the sale of my property?
No --- the Health District does not have any intent or right to do so. This program is a discovery and disclosure program to ensure that onsite systems are working properly. If violations are present, the Health District will note them on the evaluation report.

It is strongly recommended that the inspection and evaluation of the onsite sewage system be scheduled and completed as early into the sales process as possible so that any noted deficiencies can be addressed long before closing.

- How is the inspection/evaluation done & What does it include?
The inspection and evaluation consists of two primary activities: 1) A maintenance inspection of the system equipment (e.g., septic tank, pump tank, pre-treatment unit, etc.) by a certified Septic Tank Pumper or Monitoring and Maintenance Specialist; and 2) A records review, site inspection, and code compliance evaluation report by the Health District.

The maintenance inspection of the system equipment (by a Pumper or Maintenance company) should be scheduled prior to submitting the Property Conveyance Evaluation of Onsite Sewage System application to the Health District. The Health District will use the system equipment inspection report as part of its records review and code compliance evaluation.

- What will the evaluation report include?
The evaluation report is an objective, factual disclosure of the following information:
 1. A statement indicating if there is any record of approval of the system installation, when it was approved, and the type/size of use it was approved for;
 2. A statement indicating whether or not the system appears to be functioning properly and whether any maintenance needs to keep the system functioning properly;
 3. If the system is not functioning properly, a statement of what signs or symptoms indicate that there is a malfunction, and what actions need to be taken to correct the malfunction;
 4. A statement that indicates whether or not the system and the property are in compliance with the applicable rules and regulations in effect at the time the system was permitted or installed; and
 5. A copy of the permit/record of construction (if available), and a copy of the Health District's "Onsite Sewage System Homeowner's Manual" to pass to the buyer.

- How long will it take to receive my inspection and evaluation report from the Health District?
The Health District will issue its evaluation report to the applicant **within 7 business days** of receiving a completed application, regardless of any violations or issues of non-compliance. That is why the Health District strongly recommends that property owners complete the property conveyance inspection of the onsite sewage system as early in the property sale process as possible, so that if compliance issues exist, they can be addressed and corrected before closing.

- How long is the inspection and evaluation report good for?

The inspection and evaluation report issued by the Health District is generally valid for up to 3 years, provided the property remains under the same ownership and the system remains in compliance with Board of Health regulations.

- Will my old system be required to be upgraded to meet current code?

Under normal circumstances, generally no. Unless the system is failing or has major health violations (see next section, below), if it is functioning properly it will be allowed to exist as-is.

Some alternative systems may require modifications to meet the rules and conditions of approval that they were permitted under. For example, some owners may have to “retro-fit” or re-establish access ports or service risers to system components when those ports or risers have been removed. A Monitoring and Maintenance contract may be required if the system does not have a current maintenance contract, or a maintenance servicing may be required if the system has not been serviced in the past year.

- What types of situations will require immediate correction and/or result in a notice of violation?

Board of Health regulations consider the following as major violations and require immediate correction by the owner:

1. Failing, broken, or malfunctioning systems.
2. Previously designated and approved primary or reserve areas that have been eliminated, destroyed, or otherwise made unusable.
3. Use or operation of the system in violation of its approved use or design capacity.
4. Missing service access risers or observation ports for alternative systems that are required to have annual monitoring and maintenance.

- Are there any retro-fit requirements for standard systems?

Based on the date of installation, most standard systems installed after July 1978 were required to have a tank access riser installed either to the surface of the ground, or to within 12 inches of the surface. In these instances, the Health District will require that the owner have the tank riser installed before, or during, the next required inspection of the system (once every three years). Systems installed prior to 1978 were required to have access to the tank within 24 inches of the surface.

- What am I required to do if there are no records on file for my system?

The regulations require the development of a scaled site plan, or record of construction, for the property’s onsite sewage system if no record of construction, or “as-built”, exists for that property.

The purpose of this requirement is to establish a written record of what is known to exist on the property as far as the onsite sewage system, structures connected to the system, and the water source. (See “Resources/Links” section at the end of this document for more information)

It is important that the owner and/or their agent conduct a records search through the Health District website, or by making a records request to the Health District, prior to submitting inspection and evaluation application so that they know early on whether or not they will be required to create this record (See “Resources/Links” section at the end of this document).

- Do I have to hire a contractor to develop a “Record of Construction”?

No. Provided that you can meet the intent and requirements of for developing the Record of Construction, anyone can prepare this record for submittal to the Health District.

- *How do I submit an "Onsite Sewage System Inspection and Evaluation for Property Conveyance" application? What is the cost?*

The application form can be obtained at the Health District office, or via the Health District's website (See "Resources/Links" section at the end of this document). The form may be submitted either by dropping it off at the office or through the mail. Online submittal of the application is not currently available, but will be in the near future. The cost of the Health District inspection and evaluation is \$202, which covers the record search and review, site inspection, evaluation report preparation, and report processing/shipping.

- *Can I get a new/revised evaluation report if I was required to make corrections to my system?*

Yes. If required corrections are made according to Board of Health regulations, the owner can apply for a revised evaluation report at a reduced cost (\$75) so that the record shows that the system has been brought into compliance.

- *What is the recommended procedure to meet this requirement?*

The Health District recommends the following procedure when an owner intends to list a property, with an onsite sewage system, for sale (See "Resources/Links" section at the end of this document):

1. Query the Health District's website to determine if the property has any records on file. You will need the property street address and tax account number to do this.
2. If you do not find any records for the property through the website, call the Health District at 360.337.5285 to request a records search. Additional information which may be helpful to locate records for older properties can include former street addresses and the names of former owners.
3. Query the Health District's website to determine if the system is up-to-date for septic tank inspection reports (once every 3 years for standard systems) or monitoring and maintenance inspection reports or contracts (required annually for alternative systems).
4. If the property's system is in need of an equipment inspection or maintenance service/contract, contact a Health District-certified Pumper or Monitoring and Maintenance company to schedule this work.
5. Submit a completed "Onsite Sewage System Inspection and Evaluation for Property Conveyance" application form to the Health District.

This process should be initiated as early-on in the home sale process as possible so that any issues or problems can be identified and corrected as soon as possible to enable a smooth property transfer.

RESOURCES / LINKS:

- To search for records, look for the most recent inspection reports, view the local health regulations, look for a certified onsite sewage contractor, or get other onsite sewage system information, please visit our website at:
www.kitsapcountyhealth.com/environmenta_health/onsite/onsite_index.htm
- To check Kitsap County Assessor records/information for a property:
<http://kcwppub3.co.kitsap.wa.us/ParcelSearch/map.asp?CMD=INIT>
- For other questions or assistance, please call the Kitsap County Health District, Environmental Health Division at (360) 337-5285