



Septic System FAQ

1. Q: What is the role of the Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) in the septic approval process?

A: DEHS must give approval for all new onsite wastewater treatment systems. All development requiring sewage disposal must obtain DEHS' approval prior to acquiring a Building Permit. DEHS is only responsible for approving new systems in the unincorporated areas and any replacement systems located in areas without sewer service.

2. Q: When is a septic system needed?

A: Septic systems are required when a sewer connection for a property is not available.

3. Q: What are the requirements for a septic system?

A: The area must not have sewer access, the lot size must be large enough to accommodate the intended septic system, and a percolation report needs to be completed.

4. Q: What is a percolation report and what is it used for?

A: A percolation test is completed and the results are used to complete a percolation report. This report is part of the septic approval process and provides the following information: description of property, depth of groundwater, what is proposed, if there are any constraints, and the plot plan. The septic system approval is based on this report. Percolation reports are completed by Engineers, Geologists, or Environmental Health Specialists.

5. Q. Can I use a percolation report that was completed for an adjoining property (e.g. in unincorporated areas) or from a report done on a large parcel of land before it was subdivided?

A: There is a procedure in the percolation report where an adjoining lot's percolation report may be used. The owner of the report must give approval, and the engineer of record must make statements to the effect that the design rate will be satisfactory to use on the adjacent lot.

6. Q: What is a Design Rate?

A: The design specifications of a disposal system are referred to as the Design Rate. Designs are based on the septic tank and are designated in square feet per 100 gallons of tank capacity.

7. Q: What information does the percolation review provide to the customer?

A: The percolation review helps ensure the septic system, when properly installed and maintained, will function correctly for a long time (e.g. 30 years or more).

8. Q: How do I find out if a percolation report has been completed on a particular property?

A: Submit a Design Rate request to DEHS and pay the corresponding fee.



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9. Q: I am adding another bedroom to my residence; do I need to increase the size of the septic system?

A: If the original system was sized for future bedrooms, then the system does not need to be replaced. However, only the minimum system is usually installed. A septic certification will be needed to determine if a new system is required when adding on to a residence.

10. Q: I am adding a guest home to the property; do I need to increase the size of the septic system?

A: If the lot is large enough to support a second accessory dwelling unit and is at least one acre, then the second home may be permitted, but it must have its own system.

11. Q: Why is it not permissible to use the neighbor's design rate for my property?

A: The design rate is specific to the lot and the owner of the lot is usually the one who paid for the test. The engineer who performed the test bears responsibility for the design, and typically does not want to be responsible for another development.

12. Q: How close can my septic system be to a public street?

A: It depends. If there is a public water line in the street, then there must be a 25 foot setback.

13. Q: How far do the well and septic system need to be apart from each other?

A: Non-public wells must be setback a minimum of 100 feet from the septic system. The setback for public wells is dependent upon the depth. If the depth of the septic system is:

Depth of Septic	Minimum Setback
10 feet or less	150 feet
11-19 feet	200 feet
20 feet or more	600 feet

Septic systems which exceed 20 feet in depth and are located within 600 feet of a municipal well are required to have a Qualified Professional evaluate the two-year time travel for microbial contaminants to evaluate the required setback.

14. Q: Do I still need to do a percolation design review if I am only replacing a unit (kind for kind or a different type)?

A: If the system replacement is in a prohibition area or designated maintenance area, then DEHS must do a review for approval. If the system to be replaced is in a non-critical area and the replacement is kind for kind, then DEHS does not have to review and approve. The Building and Safety Department must certify that sewer service is not available on the property.