

**Department of Health and Human Services**

**Environmental Health Program**

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WashCoSeptic.com



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## REPAIR PERMIT FOR A SEPTIC SYSTEM PROCEDURE & CRITERIA

### **Where is a Septic System Needed?**

A septic system is needed in areas where no sewer service is available. An onsite sewage treatment and disposal system, also known as a septic system, treats and properly disposes of sewage including gray water.

### **Why are Permits Required?**

Permits are required to ensure septic systems are sited and constructed so that human health and the environment are protected.

### **What is a Repair Permit?**

A *Repair Construction-Installation Permit* is an authorization to replace and/or repair a septic system for a single family dwelling that is failing.

Signs of a failing septic system are ponding water, foul odors, and/or dark gray or black soils in the area surrounding the drainfield. Another indicator of a failing septic system may be sewage backing up into the lowest drains in the dwelling. A repair permit application packet can be obtained from the Washington County Environmental Health Program.

There are minor and major repair permits. Minor repair permits are for repairs that do not involve the drainfield, typically this means replacing the septic tank. Major repair permits are for repairs/replacements of the drainfield. Permits are valid for one year from the date of issue.

A major repair requires the completion of a favorable site evaluation prior to obtaining a permit. The suitability of a proposed site for a septic system is largely determined by the type

and depth of soil and the depth of the water table. Other factors include property size, site steepness, sewer service availability, and location of the system relative to streams, wells, cuts, and fills. There must also be enough area available for a full system replacement in case the system fails.

These criteria are prescribed in the Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) Chapter 304, Division 071 and 073. Obtain a copy of the rules DEQ's Onsite website, [www.oregon.gov/DEQ/](http://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/). For more information, see the "Site Evaluation for a Septic System Procedure and Criteria".

### **What are the Permit Fees?**

Permit fees are different for minor and major repair permits. Contact the Washington County Environmental Health Program for the fee schedule or to obtain specific information for a particular application.

*Note: The site evaluation fee for a major repair permit is waived.*

### **Permit Process**

**Step One:** Complete the application, include the owner or legally authorized representative's signature, and submit it to the Washington County Environmental Health Program with the required fees.

If the drainfield is being replaced, provide at least one test pit in the proposed drainfield area. The specific requirements for test pits are provided with the site evaluation application packet.

Attach the following documents:

- a) A vicinity/locator map
- b) A detailed site development plan and directions to property

**Step Two:** After the Washington County Environmental Health Program receives a completed application, an Environmental Health Specialist will visit the property to perform the site evaluation. If drainfield work is proposed, more than one visit may be necessary. Upon approval, a Repair Construction Installation Permit will be issued to replace the septic system. Once the plans are approved and the permit issued, proceed with the replacement of the septic system as prescribed in the permit. Any changes must be approved by Washington County Environmental Health Program.

**Note:** *A septic system must be installed and constructed by the owner or a DEQ licensed installer using DEQ approved materials and equipment that meet minimum standards. All equipment must be installed and operated according to the manufacturers' specifications. Contact the Washington County Environmental Health Program if you have questions about approved materials and equipment. Visit the DEQ website at [www.oregon.gov/DEQ/](http://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/) for installer information.*

**Step Three:** A Pre-cover Inspection (before it is covered with soil) of the repair is required unless waived by the Washington County Environmental Health Program. Some complex systems, such as sand filters, require inspections at various stages of construction and these inspection requirements are specified in the permit.

To initiate the Pre-cover Inspection, the installer must complete the Final Inspection Request and Notice Form and submit it to this office. This form must be signed by the installer, certifying it was installed according to DEQ's specifications. Within seven days of receipt of this completed form, the Washington County Environmental Health Program will either waive or conduct the inspection.

**Step Four:** After completion of a satisfactory inspection, cover the installation. A Certificate of Satisfactory Completion will either be left onsite or mailed after a satisfactory inspection is complete; it is then permitted to use the septic system.

For more information, contact the Washington County Environmental Health Program at (503) 846-8722, DEQ at (503) 229-5696, or visit DEQ's website: [www.oregon.gov/DEQ/](http://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/).