



COUNTY OF NEVADA
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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OSSE and SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Frequently Asked Questions

What is needed before installing a septic system?

1. Onsite Soils Evaluation (OSSE)
2. Stamped design of Onsite Wastewater Treatment System
3. Wastewater Construction Permit

For information and links to the applications [click here](#).

If you wish to apply online, you may use out [Accela Citizen Access](#).

What is an OSSE?

OSSE stands for On-Site Soil Evaluation. People have used the term “perk and mantle” for assessing what is possible for wastewater disposal on properties without access to public sewer. An OSSE is similar to a perk and mantle, but also includes observation of required setbacks, constraints, and possibilities for an individual, “on-site” septic system. The report produced by the consultant of the particular site tested on a parcel is reviewed and evaluated by a county inspector, and a “finding” statement of whether that site met standards for potential permit issuance is produced.

For how long is an OSSE report (and “finding”) valid?

Our most recent ordinance, and policy statements since, have clarified that OSSEs conducted before 1998 and after 1991 may be valid*, and those since 1998 remain valid at the present time – barring significant grading or disturbance of the tested site, or irregularity with the initial test event.

However, a new ordinance to come into effect in mid-2018, framed by requirements from the State Water Resources Control Board, will have ramifications for setbacks and for soil permeability that will render existing sewage disposal site information incomplete or previously compliant sites non-compliant, and thus make retesting necessary in some cases.

What do I need to get an OSSE done?

You first need to contract with a Certified Soils Consultant. A consultant can work with you to get a permit from the County, scheduling a backhoe for digging and coordinating the OSSE scheduling with the County.

What is the setback from a well to a septic system?

The minimum distance from a well to a septic system is **100 feet**.

What size leachfield should I have for my septic system?

The size of the drainfield is calculated from the information obtained from the soil profile, percolation test and the number of bedrooms proposed for the single-family dwelling.

I currently have a septic system installed on my property, how often should I have it pumped?

It is recommended to have the septic system pumped every 3 to 5 years. Or, when the sludge accumulates to within 12 to 18-inches from the bottom of the outlet sanitary tee.

How can I tell if my septic system is not performing properly?

Some signs to watch for to determine if a septic system is not performing adequately include:

- 1) Water drains slowly down the sink drain
- 2) A complete backup into the house
- 3) Septic drainfield may show a damp or ponding of liquid at the surface and a sewage odor may be detected.

Can I use my existing septic system if I want to add a second unit on my property?

California Code requires each new dwelling to have septic tanks.

Septic system capacity is based on the amount of bedrooms a permit was originally applied for. If the total number of bedrooms does not exceed the number of bedrooms that the system was designed for, the new system can be tied into the existing leachfield.

If the number of bedrooms does exceed the designs maximum bedroom capacity, an OSSE will need to be done and a septic modification permit will need to be applied for in order to expand the system.

What types of certifications/licenses are required for Septic System Consultants?

The septic system consultants or “Registered Professional” must be a State of California Registered Environmental Health Specialist, Geologist, Civil or Soils Engineer.

I have had a consultant on my property who determined that my septic system has failed.

What steps should I take to repair my septic system?

Contact a certified septic contractor and apply for a septic repair or replacement permit through the Nevada County Environmental Health Department.

What types of certifications/licenses are required for Septic System Contractors?

Septic System Contractors or “Registered Installers” must possess a State of California Contractor’s license (Type A, B, C-36 or C-42) to construct, enlarge, alter, repair improve or replace an individual system, or many of the components of an individual system.

What is a Maintenance and Monitoring Program?

Nevada County Land Use Ordinance requires Pressure Dose and Treatment Systems to be monitored annually by a Certified Septic Service Provider. Prior to finalization of these systems, the parcel owner is required to record a [Right of Entry Agreement](#) and apply for a Certificate of Operation (annual permit).

How can I locate my septic system?

If you do not know the location of your septic system you should do a public records request for a septic as-built (required from the Contractor after septic installation, an as-built shows the exact location of the system). Once you have your as-built, you can use a simple method by probing in the soil with a metal rod or you can hire a professional to find and trace the systems lines.

How do I convert from a septic system to public sewer?

Contact your local public sewer agency to determine if the property can connect to sanitary sewer. If your property's approved for sewer, you will need to apply for a septic tank abandonment permit from NCDEH. A septic tank that is no longer in use may pose a safety hazard.