

## Septic System Inspections - Frequently Asked Questions

### ***My septic system is working fine. Why do I have to have it inspected?***

A septic system can impact public health and the environment in a variety of ways, many of which may not be as obvious as surfacing sewage or a clogged toilet. A careful inspection of the system dramatically increases the chance that problems will be discovered, and can then be remedied before causing damage. In addition, regular inspections of a septic system should lead to a longer life for the system, which saves you money and protects the environment. Current state and local regulations also require regular inspections to protect water quality.

### ***What will the county do if I don't have my system inspected?***

Clallam County is currently educating homeowners on the regulations and the importance of regular inspections, and is committed to working with homeowners rather than against them to help them comply with the law. We continue to update our records and develop a compliance database. Administrative penalties or fines for non-compliance are beginning to be applied in areas of water quality impact concerns. CCC 41.20.270(3) allows for fines of \$5/day up to \$300/yr.

### ***Can I inspect my own system?***

For properties located in the [Marine Recovery Area](#) (MRA) of the county a record of a professional inspection completed within the past 3 years, and a record drawing of the system location is required before a homeowner can become certified to inspect their own system. Some septic systems are not eligible for [DIY inspection](#). You will need to take the required [Septics 101](#) and [201 DIY training](#) to become certified to inspect your own system. Go to the [OSS Homeowner Classroom Education](#) page for more information.

### ***What septic system upgrades are required by the county?***

There are no upgrades that are required by the county for routine inspections other than those that are related to a system that is failing. The service provider may recommend some upgrades such as risers or outlet filters to improve the operation and maintenance of your septic system. If the inspection is done for the purposes of a building permit or other government action, or if the system is found to be failing, installing risers will be required, other upgrades like monitoring ports may also be required.

### ***How much does an inspection cost?***

The cost of an inspection will vary depending on the size, complexity and accessibility of your system and its components. Complete septic system inspections can range in price from \$200 to over \$800 depending on all the elements required. At this time there is no additional fee from the county to submit an inspection report unless it is required for a governmental action.

### ***What happens if the inspection reveals that something is wrong with my septic system?***

Minor problems such as a broken baffle or tilted d-box can be fixed at the time of an inspection. Often times your maintenance provider will provide suggestions on corrections that could help extend the life of your septic system. If the tank is found to be leaking or the system failing, you will need to work with a licensed designer or professional engineer who will guide the repair permit process. The county currently refers owners to the [Craft3](#) loan program specifically for help with system repair costs.

### ***Does my tank need to be pumped every time it is inspected?***

No. The inspection will determine if your tank needs to be pumped. In general the tank will need to be pumped when the solid contents equals 1/3 of the tank volume; when the scum and sludge layers exceed 6 and 12 inches respectively; or for other reasons noted by your inspector.

### ***Do I need to be present at the time of the inspection?***

It is strongly recommended you be present during the inspection but it is not required. It is a great opportunity to learn about your system. If you are interested in learning how to inspect your own system, it is also a good training opportunity.

### ***Are other counties doing the same thing?***

Yes. The counties bordering the Straits and Puget Sound are implementing similar programs to enforce the state regulations and other counties are moving forward with adopting the requirements.

### ***Are there any other resources for information?***

Links to the Septic 101 video and additional information can be found on the county website: [www.clallamcountywa.gov/septic](http://www.clallamcountywa.gov/septic) Department of Health shares septic system care information on their [Septic System Maintenance](#) page.

There are also many pamphlets and handouts available in the Environmental Health office located in room 130 of the County Courthouse. In person Septic 101 and Septic 201 (DIY) classes are usually held several times throughout the year. Watch the paper and website or call EH (360-417-2506) for more information.