

**Clallam County
 Department of Health & Human Services
 Environmental Health Section
 TECHNICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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| Subject/Title: On-site Sewage System System Status Inspections aka Sanitary Survey | Number: |
| Applies to: Environmental Health | Effective Date: December 18, 2015 |
| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

1. BACKGROUND

Current codes require that conventional gravity septic systems be inspected every 3 years and all others be inspected annually. In addition, there are certain governmental actions such as building permits, land divisions or boundary line adjustments that require a septic system to be inspected, as well as the sale of property that has a septic system. Conditions that require a system status inspection vary, as does the intensity of the inspection. The intensity for older, undocumented systems will be greater than for systems with records and evidence of recent pumping or inspections.

2. AUTHORITY/REFERENCE

WAC 246-272A State Board of Health On-site Sewage Regulations
 Chapter 41.20 Clallam County On-site Sewage Ordinance
 RCW 70.188A Marine Recovery Areas

3. PURPOSE

This policy addresses the reasons and procedures for conducting a system status inspection (aka sanitary survey) of on-site sewage disposal systems (OSS) under Clallam County jurisdiction.

System Status inspections are required for various reasons:

- I. OSS owners are required to have a full evaluation of their OSS on an annual or three year basis depending on the type of OSS (WAC 246-272A- 0270).
- II. Food Service Establishments are required to have annual inspections of their OSS (WAC 246-272A-0278).
- III. Report of system status for land use and other governmental actions (Chapter 41.20.180)
 - (1) A system status report may be requested by the Health Officer for the following purposes:
 - (a) Issuing building permits;
 - (b) Land divisions and boundary line adjustments when an existing OSS is part of the proposal;

Clallam County
 Department of Health & Human Services
 Environmental Health Section
TECHNICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| Applies to: Environmental Health | Effective Date: December 18, 2015 |
| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

- (c) Conditional use permits;
- (d) Variances or compliance with the Critical Areas Code, Chapter 27.12 CCC;
- (e) Certificate of occupancy for commercial building permits;
- (f) Change of use.

IV. Report of system status required at time of transfer of ownership (Chapter 41.20.190)

V. Marine Recovery Areas (RCW 70.118A.050)

An on-site strategy for a marine recovery area must specify how the local health jurisdiction will by July 1, 2012, and thereafter, find:

- (a) Existing failing systems and ensure that system owners make necessary repairs; and
- (b) Unknown systems and ensure that they are inspected as required to ensure that they are functioning properly, and repaired, if necessary.

4. DEFINITIONS

Certified Designer means a person licensed under Chapter 18.210 RCW to design and inspect on-site sewage systems and may also apply to professional engineers licensed under Chapter 18.43 RCW.

Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Provider means a person licensed to inspect, monitor, and maintain on-site sewage systems. This does not include an individual licensed by a local health officer solely to pump septic tanks, or homeowners who are approved to monitor and maintain their own On-site Septic System (OSS).

Record Drawing (commonly known as an “as-built”) means a scaled drawing depicting the location of all components of the septic system in relation to the building it serves, property lines, water source, etc.

Clallam County
Department of Health & Human Services
Environmental Health Section
TECHNICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| Applies to: Environmental Health | Effective Date: December 18, 2015 |
| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

Report means the paper or electronic document which verifies the type of inspection, type of system and use of the system, the status of all components at the time of inspection and any required or recommended actions to be taken. A report shall be considered “current” for property sales and food establishment permits if conducted within the 12 months prior to the sale or permit issuance.

System Status Inspection means the process of having a septic system fully inspected to assure functionality of the system. The inspection should include all components of the system including but not limited to: the septic tank, distribution box, pump chamber, pump, wiring and controls, treatment units and disposal area.

5. POLICY

A. Personnel

- i. Individuals who perform system status inspections shall be Certified Designers, Licensed Operation and Maintenance Providers, or Professional Engineers licensed in the state of Washington. Inspections conducted for Food Service Establishments must be performed by a licensed designer or Professional Engineer, unless a maintenance contract is in place with a licensed maintenance provider (Level II) prior to the effective date of this policy. For building and land use activities, the applicant must contact a Certified Designer or Professional Engineer.
- ii. Homeowners may be able to inspect their own system provided all the requirements of CCC 41.20.170 (1)(b) are met. Homeowners are not eligible to perform System Status inspections for governmental actions or property transfer of ownership.
- iii. Whenever the issue is code compliance and legal action is possible, county employees will conduct or be present during the evaluation, following standard rules for the collection of evidence and attention to due process.

B. Building Activity

System status reports may be required in conjunction with a building activity such as:

- i. Building enlargement/change in use – any addition in area, especially in number of bedrooms, or alteration of the foundation outline of a structure which may impact the septic system. Conversion of a residence to a business may impact the septic system. The focus of

**Clallam County
 Department of Health & Human Services
 Environmental Health Section
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| Applies to: Environmental Health | Effective Date: December 18, 2015 |
| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

the review should include set-backs, available repair area and any changes in sewage flows (volume or quality).

- ii. **Building replacement** – the replacement of a demolished or burned building, the replacement of one mobile home with another, or the substantial remodel (as determined by the Building Official or an increase in square footage of fifteen percent or more) of an existing structure may require an evaluation of the exiting septic system. The focus should include verification and documentation of the current system and assessment of set-backs, change of flows and suitable repair area.
- iii. **Detached structures** – the building of a detached structure may impact a system, depending on location. The inspection must ascertain that the drainfield area and repair area will not be affected by the building or building drainage run-off. Should there be clear evidence (i.e. detailed plot plan noting the location of the drainfield area and the proposed detached building site) that the drainfield area location will not be affected by the construction of the detached building, an inspection may not be required. This situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. This does not relieve the homeowner from having a current System Status Inspection report on file with the Environmental Health Section (EHS).

C. Subdivision/Boundary Line Adjustment Review

An inspection may be required during plat evaluation, boundary line adjustment and conditional use permits to determine the status of an existing system. System performance, location in reference to proposed lot lines, setbacks and repair area are to be evaluated.

D. Property Sales/Transfer of Ownership

A property owner shall be required to provide the buyer with a current report of system status performed within the prior 12 month period.

E. Food Service Establishments

Food Service Establishments shall be inspected annually and shall have a satisfactory current inspection report on file prior to issuance of an annual operating permit:

- i. The Health Officer may waive the requirement for an annual inspection to a three year inspection cycle if the establishment is served by a gravity drainfield system and it can be demonstrated that the waste strength is similar to that of a residential system.

**Clallam County
 Department of Health & Human Services
 Environmental Health Section
 TECHNICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
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| Applies to: Environmental Health | Effective Date: December 18, 2015 |
| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

- ii. An inspection may be required for a change of use or menu; the inspection must address potential impacts to the system such as wastewater strength or increase in wastewater flow.
- iii. An inspection may be required before a closed establishment can reopen; the OSS will need to be in compliance with design standards for operation based on the operational, wastewater strength, and capacity needs of the food establishment. The OSS should be updated to include risers where appropriate and cleanouts on pressure system drainlines.

F. Frequency

Regardless of the type of activity, an inspection may be required if the system has not been inspected within the prior 3 years.

G. Code Compliance

It may also be necessary to evaluate a system in order to determine compliance with current code. This may be done at the request of the home-owner or occupant. A site visit and an OSS dye test may also be done at the order of the Health Officer to respond to a complaint or to help identify the source of sewage discharges.

H. Records

Inspection reports shall be submitted on forms approved by Environmental Health. The report shall contain the septic permit number if known. All observations made during the inspection will be included on the report, along with any receipts for pumping, repairs or system upgrades if available.

It shall be noted if the premises are vacant or occupied. Record drawings shall be verified as correct and shall be provided as part of the report if none exist. OSS determined to be failing shall be reported to EHS within two working days. All records provided will become public records as far as disclosure is concerned.

I. Records Review

Inspection records will be reviewed by EH staff for errors, omissions, and inconsistencies and, if found, documented and returned to the entity responsible for performing the inspection. When possible EH staff will review and analyze inspection data for trends and overall performance of the OSS inspection program.

Clallam County
Department of Health & Human Services
Environmental Health Section
TECHNICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Subject/Title: On-site Sewage System System Status Inspections aka Sanitary Survey | Number: |
| Applies to: Environmental Health | Effective Date: December 18, 2015 |
| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

J. Corrective Action

If a problem is noted during an inspection, the EHS may request a delay in proceeding with additional action such as approving or issuing permits, until needed corrections are made and verified. If accomplished, the information will be updated in Permit Plan with an activity and case status becomes "Reports Current" instead of "System Deficient".

K. Remedial Action

In no case shall an evaluation of a system or the subsequent report relieve the owner of maintenance or disclosure responsibilities. Nor shall it limit the EHS's ability or authority to pursue remedial action necessary to correct violations of applicable codes or standards discovered during or after evaluation.

L. Routing of copies

The person responsible for the inspection shall submit a copy to the Environmental Health Section (EHS). The preferred method of submission is through Online RME (or its successor). Normal copy costs may be charged for additional copies. The EHS will not be responsible for insuring that lenders or sellers pass on information to potential buyers.

M. Disclaimers

All EHS generated reports will carry a disclaimer noting that the EHS neither implies nor guarantees successful system performance.

6. REFERENCES

WAC 246-272A On-site Sewage Systems

Section 0270 Operation, Monitoring and Maintenance – Owner responsibilities

Section 0275 Operation, Monitoring and Maintenance – Food Service Establishments

WAC 173-201A Water Quality Standards

Clallam County Board of Health Regulation 41.20 On-site Sewage Systems

Section 170 Local Management Plan and Regulation,

Section 180 Report of System Status for land use and other governmental actions,

Section 190 Report of system status required at time of transfer of ownership,

Washington State Department of Health "Basics of On-site Sewage" (1992),

WA DOH Rule Development Committee-Issue Research Report-Failing Systems (2002),

EPA On-site Wastewater Treatment Manual (2002),

Conducting On-site Sewage System Status Inspections (Clallam County 2013).

Clallam County
 Department of Health & Human Services
 Environmental Health Section
 TECHNICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

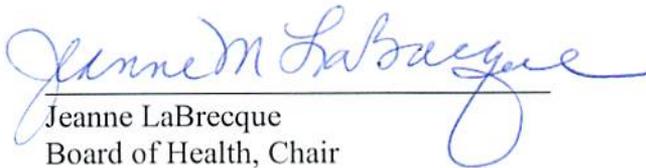
7. Fees

Fees shall be as set forth in the fee schedule.

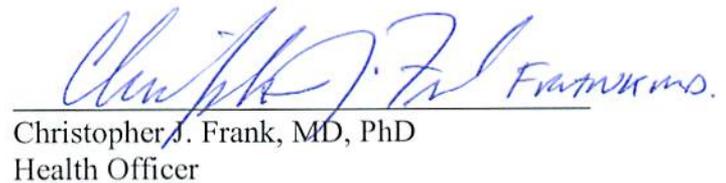
Decisions made under this policy are appealable to the Clallam County Health Officer.

This policy shall remain in effect until amended or appealed by action by the Clallam County Board of Health.

APPROVED this 18th of December 2015
Day Month Year



 Jeanne LaBrecque
 Board of Health, Chair



 Christopher J. Frank, MD, PhD
 Health Officer

Adopted July 8, 1991
 Amended Feb. 21, 1995
 Amended Dec. 18, 2015

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 Department of Health & Human Services
 Environmental Health Section
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Appendix A: Protocol and Guidelines for Conducting On-site Sewage System Status Inspections
 The following shall be used as a guideline for conducting on-site sewage system status inspections.

Septic Tank

1. Verify the location and size of the septic tank. Size may be determined by physical measurement or pumper receipt.
2. Pumping shall be required when either:
 - A. The sludge is within 8” of the bottom of the baffle or the depth is 12” or greater;
 - B. The scum layer is within 3” of the bottom of the baffle or the depth is 6” or greater.
 - C. The total of the two layers is 18” or greater.

Pumping may also be required when the tank is “unhealthy” as indicated by color, odor or debris in the tank.

3. Verify construction and internal integrity by visual inspection of the baffles and interior walls and level of effluent in the tank. Verify risers are secure and not leaking.
4. Septic tanks constructed of wood or metal or found to be leaking shall not be considered approved and replacement will be required. A permit for placement of the tank shall be required. Risers shall be required on all new tanks and recommended for all existing tanks. Inspections conducted for the purpose of a building permit shall require risers to be installed on both lids of the septic tank and the distribution box if present.
5. The installation of the replacement septic tank shall be inspected and a portion of the field should be uncovered to determine if full repair of the on-site system is necessary.
6. Cesspools shall not be considered approved and shall be replaced.
7. For the purposes of a building permit, risers will be required if not already present.

Other Components

- Pump chambers, distribution boxes and secondary tanks must also be evaluated.
- Pump chambers must have size and structural integrity verified.

Clallam County
Department of Health & Human Services
Environmental Health Section
TECHNICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| Applies to: Environmental Health | Effective Date: December 18, 2015 |
| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

- Pump systems must have floats, alarms, switches, timers and control panels evaluated.
- Distribution boxes (d-boxes) must be located and checked for leaks and even flow. Speed levelers may be added if necessary.
- Risers on pump chambers and d-boxes will be required for building permits.

Drainfield

1. Verify location from permit, as-built or record drawing.

If no permit or as-built exists, it will be necessary to do a system locate. This includes systems for which a permit was issued but for which there was no final inspection. A new record drawing shall be submitted with the inspection report. If the system cannot be located by any means, it shall be so stated and a repair area designated. Reports with “assumed drainfield area” shall not be accepted except as stated above. Locating by “witching” will not be accepted.

Where records do exist, check for accuracy and that the repair area is still set aside and protected. Gross inaccuracies should be noted and may be the basis for remedial or corrective action.

2. Repair areas shall be designated if not already shown on prior records. Test holes may be required.

3. Verify the drainfield size. If no records exist, exploration of a lateral to determine trench width, length and/or depth may be necessary. Evaluation of drainfield size and capacity can be done by running water into the septic tank and observing any rise in the liquid level in the septic tank. To estimate peak water usage, the water should be run for at least ten minutes; a 20 minute stress test is preferred. If the liquid level in the septic tank rises and does not lower in five minutes, the drainfield can be assumed to be of reduced capacity. A drainfield repair or expansion may be necessary.

On older systems a sizing calculation may be done to compare the existing field to current standards. The calculation shall be based on the number of bedrooms at 120 gallons per bedroom and available square footage of the field. An actual loading rate should also be determined.

4. Where observation ports are present, check for signs of breakage, as well as for signs of drainfield failure such as ponding and/or drainrock discoloration. Where there are no observation ports present, careful probing or digging into the trench to assess drainrock coloring and ponding shall be done.

Clallam County
 Department of Health & Human Services
 Environmental Health Section
TECHNICAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| Applies to: Environmental Health | Effective Date: December 18, 2015 |
| Approved by: Clallam County Board of Health | Pages 10 |

5. Pressurized systems inspected for a building permit shall be required to have cleanouts on the drainlines.

6. Functioning drywells are acceptable unless it is determined that contamination of groundwater is likely. This includes areas with shallow water tables and areas with Type 1 soils.

Compliance Inspections

In the case of compliance inspections, the introduction of dye into the system is warranted, preferable via the septic tank outlet baffle. As a minimum, 2 ounces of liquid concentrate dye for a 1,000-1,250 gallon tank should be introduced and monitored for at least one week. If no dye is witnessed after one week, the test may be considered negative or inconclusive. Charcoal packets may also be placed to check for the presence of dye.

Bacteriological exams of possible effluent may also indicate the presence or absence of sewage effluent. Fecal coliform counts in the range of 100,000 colonies/100 ml are indicative of direct discharge of raw sewage; counts in the range of 1000-10,000/100 ml are indicative of sewage and may require further evaluation. Counts below 200 are considered negative for sewage discharges.

References

- WAC 246-272A On-site Sewage Systems
- WAC 173-201A Water Quality Standards
- Clallam County Board of Health Regulation 41.20 On-site Sewage Systems
- Washington State Department of Health "Basics of On-site Sewage" (1992)
- WA DOH Rule Development Committee-Issue Research Report-Failing Systems (2002)
- EPA On-site Wastewater Treatment Manual (2002)