

Questions to ask your Septic System Professionals

We recommend you contact a minimum of three certified professionals to compare prices and services.

Contact a designer if:

- System has failed and needs replacing
- Building a new residence on your property
- Remodeling your house and need a change to your septic system
- Remodeling your house and do not have a record drawing (as-built) of your existing septic system
- For a list of certified designers, visit www.tpchd.org/designers

Ask the designer:

Will the services include the following?

- Preliminary site evaluation
- Soil log digging
- Design package
- Stub-out inspection
- Pressure test
- Installation inspection
- Backfill inspection
- As-built package
- Does this include Health Department fees?
- Do you charge extra for the Homeowner's manual?
- Do you charge for extra visits or consultations?

Contact an installer when:

- Installing a new septic system that has been approved by Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Making any construction changes to the system—Health Department code requires that installation of a septic system be performed by certified septic system installers
- Be sure you know what type of system you have before you call the installer
- For a list of certified installers, visit www.tpchd.org/installers

Ask the installer:

Will the services include the following?

- Preliminary evaluation
- Design for tank replacement
- Full installation
- Backfill labor and materials
- Warranty on your work
- Electrical work
- Does total bid include Health Department fee?
- Is this bid all inclusive? Any extra charges?

Tip: For a repair, the installer/designer should inspect the property, look at the soil logs, and determine the possible cause of failure.

Contact a certified Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Specialist if:

- You have been notified by the Health Department
- You are remodeling your residence
- You are selling your home (discuss with your realtor)
- Your system is not operating properly—you need minor repairs on your system that does not need a permit (Note: installers can also perform minor repairs)
- Your system is due for an O&M inspection—the chart shows required inspection frequencies based on the type of septic system you have required by the Health Department code
- For a list of certified O&M Specialists, visit www.tpchd.org/septicservicecompanies

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Every year	Every three years	At time of sale/land development
high risk classified systems-proprietary/pretreatment	mounds	gravity
large community	small community drainfields	
large commercial	sand filters	
camps	off-site drainfields	
self contained systems	duplexes (2 unit only)	
	small commercials	
	pressure distribution	

Ask the certified O&M Specialist:

- What will the O&M inspection include (e.g., checking baffles and for leaks, cleaning filters, digging to uncover lids, structural integrity and drainfield checks, etc.)?
- What is not included in the O&M inspection?
- What are the benefits to installing risers to the surface (if needed)?
- Ask about any discounts that might be offered (e.g., senior, new customer, etc.)
- Does the inspection cost include Health Department fee?
- When will the report be entered in onlineRME for viewing?
- Keep track of your inspection report by logging into onlineRME.com and do a public record search

Contact a certified pumper if:

- It has been determined your system needs pumping by an O&M Specialist
- The total of sludge and scum in your tank is one third of the liquid depth (effluent) or over 18 inches
- You are selling your house—pumping of all tanks is required along with the O&M inspection of your septic system
- Tanks should be pumped every three–five years depending on usage/family size

Ask the certified pumper:

- What the pumping will include (e.g., checking baffles and for leaks, cleaning filters, pump tank pumping if needed, etc.)?
- Do you charge extra if my septic tank is over 1000 gallons?
- If you have a long distance to reach the tanks or if they need to pump up a steep slope, provide the distance and elevation to the pumper—the pumper determines whether the truck can provide this type of service
- Let the pumper know: size, type, accessibility of lids, age of house and last time system was pumped
- Does the pumping cost include the Health Department fee?
- Ask about any discounts that might be offered (e.g., senior, new customer, etc.)
- When will the report be entered in onlineRME for viewing?
- Keep track of your pumping report by logging into onlineRME.com and do a public record search

If you have questions on any of these items, please contact Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6470 or email us at EHSepticsystems@tpchd.org.