

# COUNTY OF



# ALLEGHENY

**RICH FITZGERALD**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

## ON-LOT SEWAGE DISPOSAL PROGRAM

### PERMITTING OVERVIEW

To obtain a permit for an on-lot sewage disposal system, the following steps are required by the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act prior to the issuance of a permit for installation or repair of a sewage disposal system:

- 1) The property/lot owner applies for a permit through the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), by calling 412 578-8056. The application is not available online and must be sent and received via mail, email or in person.
- 2) The OWNER OF RECORD shall complete **Part I** of the permit application and sign on the **Property Owner's** signature line and date in **Part IV**. Return the completed application, a check or money order for the application fees, along with a copy of the complete deed and survey of the property. If the OWNER OF RECORD is authorizing someone else (potential buyer, real estate agent, etc.) to conduct the necessary testing, they must send signed, written permission along with the application (current property owner must still fill out and sign application). All invoices, correspondence, etc. will be sent to the property owner, unless otherwise specified.
- 3) After reviewing the application, the Sewage Enforcement Officer (SEO) will check for completeness. The initial application fee includes reviewing paperwork and 4 deep pit soil evaluations. If the application is incomplete or there are questions about the information, an incomplete letter describing any deficiencies will be sent. Once all information is submitted and invoice is paid, an appointment with the SEO can be scheduled.  
**IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SCHEDULE THE APPOINTMENT FOR TESTING. THIS OFFICE WILL NOT CALL YOU TO SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT.**
- 4) The first series of tests shall consist of deep pits; four (4) deep pit tests are included in the initial application fee. The applicant/representative must be present and have a backhoe and operator ready on site when the deep pits are being conducted. The pits are approximately 6 ft. long x 3 ft. wide x 4 ft. deep. Property boundaries must be clearly marked and must remain in place through all phases of the permitting process. The test site must be accessible. If the site passes the deep pit tests, you can schedule an appointment with SEO to conduct the percolation (perc) tests. The perc tests are necessary to determine the system's design requirements. All proposed absorption areas passing the deep pit tests must also undergo perc tests. If the site does not pass the deep pit test, you may be referred to a Professional Soil Scientist for testing for an alternate system.
- 5) The perc test is a timed water test; this test is also conducted by the SEO. Each perc test costs \$195. The perc test consists of eight (8) holes within ten (10) feet of the approved deep pit. The SEO will give you written directions for the preparation and will determine the depth of holes. The owner/representative will be responsible for having a sufficient amount of water available at the site. If the site does not pass the perc test, a permit will be denied for that property and you may be referred to a Professional Soil Scientist for testing for an alternate system.
- 6) If the site does not qualify for a conventional system (Elevated Sand Mound Bed) the site may qualify for an alternate system. Testing for an alternate system must be conducted by a Professional Soil Scientist (list will be provided with a denial letter) and all testing must be verified by the ACHDSEO.



DEBRA BOGEN, MD, DIRECTOR  
**ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
**ON-LOT SEWAGE DISPOSAL PROGRAM**  
3901 PENN AVENUE • BUILDING 5 • PITTSBURGH, PA 15224-1318  
PHONE: 412.578.8040 • FAX: 412.578.8053  
[WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/HEALTHDEPARTMENT](http://WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/HEALTHDEPARTMENT)



- 7) Alternate systems may be used to serve residential development. Alternate systems approved by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) require proper operation and maintenance to assure adequate sewage treatment. There are a number of alternate systems that meet the criteria listed under the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act; Title 25 Pa. Code Section 73.72. All systems require a maintenance agreement before a permit will be issued. Alternate systems are permitted by the ACHD.
- 8) When all the testing has been conducted and approved, the SEO will send a design requirement letter to the owner/representative. When the design is submitted, the SEO will review the design. If the design meets the criteria for approval and all the fees have been paid, the permit will be issued. If the design does not meet the criteria, a letter will be sent detailing the changes needed. The revised design will be submitted and once approved the permit will be issued. Alternate Systems must have a maintenance agreement submitted to the ACHD before a permit will be issued.
- 9) Permits issued are valid for three (3) years (2 years for holding tanks). It is important to protect the primary and back-up site. If the site should become disturbed and cannot be used, the permit will be revoked and new testing will be required.
- 10) Once construction is ready to begin, the permit holder must call the SEO to schedule a pre-construction inspection. The SEO will verify that no changes have occurred at the site and answer any questions you or the installer may have.
- 11) When the piping, sand, trenches, tanks, and/or other components of the system have been installed, it is time for a final inspection. The permit holder must call the SEO to schedule the final inspection. After this inspection, if everything meets the state's codes, final approval will be given and the system may be covered.

## REPAIRS

If you are experiencing a problem with your septic system, either sewage is pooling in your yard or your neighbor's yard or backing up into the house, the process is almost the same as described above.

The following repairs require a permit from the ACHD:

- Replacing of septic, dosing or aerobic tanks.
- Increasing the size of the absorption area.
- Replacing the absorption area.
- Installation of an alternate absorption area.
- Construction of a new or replacement system.

The following actions do not require a permit from the ACHD:

- Pumping septic, dosing or aerobic tanks.
- Repairing cracked or broken pipe in absorption area.
- Repairing wiring or broken pump.
- Leveling the distribution box.
- Installing water saving devices (If fixtures changes are involved, such as low-flush toilets, a plumbing permit is required through the ACHD Plumbing Section (412) 578-8036).

Prior to the visit by the SEO, you shall expose your septic and dosing tanks, distribution box, and a portion of the absorption (leach) field adequate to determine size, type and condition of the field, so it can be inspected. Failure to provide these preliminary preparations will result in the inspection/testing being cancelled and the applicant invoiced a site visit fee.

Please be advised that you may not proceed with a septic system repair until you have been issued a valid permit.