



# Cowlitz County Health and Human Services

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WEBSITE: [www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/HHS](http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/HHS)

Main Campus: 1952 9th Avenue, Longview, WA 98632 [AskCowlitzHealth@CowlitzWA.gov](mailto:AskCowlitzHealth@CowlitzWA.gov)

Environmental Health Unit: 207 4th Avenue North, Kelso, WA 98626 [OMSeptic@CowlitzWA.gov](mailto:OMSeptic@CowlitzWA.gov)

## PROCEDURES FOR ON-SITE SEWAGE SYSTEM (OSS) Evaluations, Design Reviews, and Permits

### 1. SOIL EVALUATION

- Licensed Washington Wastewater Treatment System Designers or Professional Engineers\* perform soil evaluations.
- This is an analysis of the soils and the site to determine the site's capability to meet minimum requirements for an on-site sewage disposal system, as per WAC 246-272A.
- Lot size requirements are determined by the soil type, water source, and zoning.
- Soil Evaluations require a fee to the Environmental Health Unit (EHU) of Cowlitz County Health & Human Services (CCHHS).
- Soil evaluations may be submitted to the EHU for review, but do not constitute a design review or adequate information for permit application.
- Prior to permit application, a design review is required.
- Soil Evaluations are good for five years from the date of evaluation provided no changes are made to the site.

### SOIL EVALUATIONS DO NOT GUARANTEE BUILDING, PLANNING OR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH APPROVAL FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT

### 2. DESIGN REVIEW

- The EHU will complete a design review for the on-site sewage system.
- A licensed Washington Wastewater Treatment System Designer or Professional Engineer\* prepares this design.
- Any discrepancies found during the design review are addressed directly to the designer/engineer for correction or modification and copied to the applicant or OSS owner. The licensed individual completing the design must stamp all designs.
- The type of system proposed for the property determines the department's design review fee. The fee is due at the time of application. The design must have the designer cover sheet attached to the front of the design.
- A design approval is required prior to issuance of a septic permit.
- Design approvals are good for five years from the date of approval.

### 3. SEPTIC PERMIT

- This is the construction permit. This permit is required for the installation or modification of any treatment system component: New, Repair, Replacement, or Alteration. This permit is required to be on site prior to beginning construction on an On-Site Sewage System (OSS).
- The permit fee is due at the time of application and may include additional fees for Critical Areas Determination and an Environmental Planning review.
- A list of installers licensed by Cowlitz County is available from the EHU.
- Submit a complete master application form. Fee is due with the application.

- Information needed on application form:
  - Applicant's name, address, and telephone number: (The applicant is the proposed buyer, developer or owner of the property. Realtors, sellers, or contractors should have written permission from the owner before applying.)
  - Property owner: As recorded in the County Assessor's office.
  - Project address: A site address will be assigned if needed as a part of the design review permit. Fill in the road/street name and city. Addressing fee is due with the application.
  - Legal description: This information may be obtained from the owner, tax statement, plat maps, assessor's office, or earnest money agreement.
  - Lot size: State size of the entire parcel to be evaluated in acres or square feet. If part of a larger parcel, indicate on the Assessor's plat map where the smaller parcel is located within the larger parcel.
  - Project description: Indicate the type of dwelling or commercial use building to be placed on the parcel. If it is a dwelling, indicate the number of bedrooms in the space provided. For commercial uses, state the number of people per day and the nature of the business.

#### **4. APPROVALS**

- When a parcel has an approved septic design and all "Prior to Issuance" requirements are met including payment of fees, a permit will be issued.
- The permit is valid for two years only, there are no renewals.
- The system must be installed according to the approved design and permit specifications in the approved area. All paid installers must be licensed by CCHHS.
- Final inspection will take place once the designer and installer have submitted the required paperwork.

#### **5. SYSTEM VERIFICATION**

- System verifications are required for reconnecting/connecting older systems to new dwellings or when adding bedrooms onto existing structures.
- System verifications are required to determine that septic systems are functioning in a manner that is protective of human health and the environment.
- System verifications require that a designer evaluate the currently installed system. The designer must evaluate the current system for:
  - Trench depth as installed
  - Soil profile immediately adjacent to the drainfield
  - Tank size
  - Tank condition
  - Reserve area
  - Operating condition of current system
- The evaluation must be submitted to the EHU for review along with an application and the corresponding fee.
- If the system is found to be failing, or inadequate for the size of the dwelling, a design for a new system will be required.

## 6. MINIMUM DISTANCE REQUIREMENTS (SETBACKS)

### See Appendix A: P8461 OSS Minimum Horizontal Separations

Sewage disposal systems **shall**:

- Be free from encroachment by buildings, driveways, vehicular traffic, accumulated water, rain gutter diversions, and water diversion ditches or other drainage pipes.
- Be installed in a state flood control zone only with a permit from the Washington State Department of Ecology under RCW Chapter 86.16.

Applicants may appeal determinations to the Hearings Examiner. The appeal must be made in writing and filed with the Department within 21 calendar days from the date on which the decision was issued (CCC 15.42- Notice of decision – Adjudication proceeding).

\* Questions, comments, or concerns regarding designers or engineers designing wastewater systems should be directed to the Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) at 360-664-1568, or by accessing the DOL website at: <http://www.wa.gov/dol/bpd/onsitefront.htm>



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## Appendix A: OSS Minimum Horizontal Separations On-Site Sewage Systems (OSS) WAC 246-272A-0210

Table IV: Minimum Horizontal Separations  
 Effective Date: April 1, 2025

Items Requiring Setback	From edge of soil dispersal component and reserve area	From sewage tank and distribution box	From building sewer, and nonperforated distribution pipe
Well	100 ft.	50 ft.	50 ft.
Public drinking water well	100 ft.	100 ft.	100 ft.
Nonpublic drinking water well	100 ft.	50 ft.	50 ft.
Public drinking water spring or surface water measured from the ordinary high-water mark	200 ft.	200 ft.	100 ft.
Nonpublic drinking water spring or surface water measured from the ordinary high-water mark <sup>1</sup>	100 ft.	50 ft.	50 ft.
Nonpublic, in-ground, drinking water containment vessel <sup>3</sup>	20 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.
Pressurized water supply line or easement for water supply line	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.
Closed geothermal loop <sup>4</sup> or pressurized nonpotable water line	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.
Decommissioned well (decommissioned in accordance with chapter 173-160 WAC)	10 ft.	N/A	N/A
Surface water measured from the ordinary high-water mark	100 ft.	50 ft.	10 ft.
Building foundation/in-ground swimming pool	10 ft.	5 ft.	2 ft.
Property or easement line	5 ft.	5 ft.	N/A
Lined <sup>5</sup> stormwater detention pond <sup>6</sup>			
Down-gradient <sup>7</sup> :	30 ft.	N/A	N/A
Up-gradient <sup>7</sup> :	10 ft.	N/A	N/A
Unlined <sup>8</sup> stormwater infiltration pond <sup>6</sup> (up or down-gradient) <sup>7</sup>	100 ft.	50 ft.	10 ft.
Irrigation canal or irrigation pond (up or down-gradient)	100 ft.	50 ft.	10 ft.
Interceptor/curtain drains/foundation/drains/ drainage ditches			
Down-gradient <sup>2</sup> :	30 ft.	5 ft.	N/A
Up-gradient <sup>2</sup> :	10 ft.	N/A	N/A
Subsurface stormwater infiltration or dispersion component <sup>6</sup>			
Down-gradient <sup>7</sup> :	30 ft.	10 ft.	N/A
Up-gradient <sup>7</sup> :	30 ft.	10 ft.	N/A
Other site features that may allow effluent to surface			
Down-gradient <sup>2</sup> :	30 ft.	5 ft.	N/A
Up-gradient <sup>2</sup> :	10 ft.	N/A	N/A
Down-gradient cuts or banks with at least 5 ft. of original, undisturbed soil above a restrictive layer due to a structural or textural change	25 ft.	N/A	N/A
Down-gradient cuts or banks with less than 5 ft. of original, undisturbed soil above a restrictive layer due to a structural or textural change	50 ft.	N/A	N/A
Soil dispersal components serving a separate OSS	10 ft.	N/A	N/A

<sup>1</sup> If surface water is used as a public drinking water supply, the designer shall locate the OSS outside of the required source water protection area.  
<sup>2</sup> The item is down-gradient when liquid will flow toward it upon encountering a water table or a restrictive layer. The item is up-gradient when liquid will flow away from it upon encountering a water table or restrictive layer.  
<sup>3</sup> Any in-ground containment vessel used to store drinking water.  
<sup>4</sup> A network of underground piping carrying fluid under pressure used to heat and cool a structure.  
<sup>5</sup> Lined means any component that has the intended function of detaining the stormwater with no intention of dispersal into surrounding soil.  
<sup>6</sup> OSS components take precedence in cases of horizontal setback conflicts between OSS and stormwater components.  
<sup>7</sup> Down-gradient means that subsurface water flows toward and is usually located lower in elevation. Up-gradient means subsurface water does not flow toward and generally flat or flows away from and generally located higher in elevation.  
<sup>8</sup> Unlined means any component that has the ability to or intended function of infiltrating the stormwater.