

Procedures and Criteria for Installing a New Septic System



Where is a Septic System needed?

In areas where no sewer service is available, an On-site Sewage Treatment and Disposal System, also known as a *septic system*, is needed to treat and properly dispose of sewage, which includes grey water.

Why are permits required?

The permitting process ensures that septic systems are sited and constructed so that human health and the environment are protected.

In some counties DEQ administers the on-site program, while in other counties the County government administers the program as the *agent* for DEQ.

What permit do I need?

A *Construction-Installation Permit* is usually what is needed to install a septic system for a single-family dwelling or a system that has a projected sewage flow less than 2,500 gallons per day. This permit is valid for 1 year. For an additional fee it may be renewed or reinstated if it takes longer to complete construction and installation.

If you have questions about permits for larger or more complex systems, contact Harney County Planning Department 541-573-8174.

What is the permitting process?

There are two steps involved. **Step 1** is the *Site Evaluation*. A Site Evaluation must be done to determine which type and size of system is suitable for your property. This is usually done prior to subdividing and sale of property.

Getting the permit is **Step 2**. With a favorable Site Evaluation in hand, you may apply for the permit which must be obtained before installation of a septic system can begin.

What are the permitting fees?

Each step of the process has separate applications and fees that are determined by the type of system and the amount of proposed sewage flow. To obtain specific fee information for a particular application, please call Harney County Planning Dept

Step 1: Site Evaluation

A. Site Evaluation Criteria

The suitability of a proposed site for a septic system is largely determined by the type and depth of soil and the depth to the water table. Other factors include the size of the property, how steep the site is, location of the system relative to streams, wells, cuts and fills, and whether sewer service is available. There must also be enough area available for a full system replacement in case the system fails. These criteria are prescribed in Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) Chapter 340, [Division 071](#) and [Division 073](#). A copy of the rules can be obtained from the Harney County website or by calling Harney County Planning Dept. at 541-573-8174.

B. Site Evaluation Process

1 The Site Evaluation application form must be completely filled out, signed by the owner or legally authorized representative, and submitted to the appropriate office along with the fee. A tax lot map, a detailed drawing of the proposed development, and directions to the property must be included. You must also provide at least 2 test pits at least 75 feet apart (more are necessary for large systems) in the proposed drainfield area. The specific requirements for test pits are provided with the Site Evaluation information packet.

2 After a completed application is received, an *On-site Specialist* will visit your property to perform the Site Evaluation. Depending on weather, test pit placement and if additional test pits need to be dug, more than one visit may be necessary. Our goal is to respond to completed Site Evaluation applications within three (3) weeks of receiving them however during the summer it may take addition time.

3 You will receive a *Site Evaluation Report* that specifies the approved area, the type and size of the septic system required and any special requirements. Should the site be rejected you have 90 days in which you may provide additional test pits for evaluation with no additional fees. The Site Evaluation Report will also give you information such as applying for a site evaluation report review and the opportunity to apply for a variance from any rule or standard.

Onsite Program
360 N. Alvord
Burns, Oregon 97720
541-573-8174 or 6655

Step 2. The Permit

A. Permit Criteria

You must have a favorable Site Evaluation Report in order to apply for a Construction-Installation permit. A permit application packet can be obtained from the onsite agent for your county.

B. Permit Process

1. To prevent a delay, fully complete the application, including the owner's or legally authorized representative's signature, and submit it along with the required fees. At a minimum, the following documents must be attached:

- a) A copy of the Site Evaluation Report.
- b) A *Land Use Compatibility Statement* signed by your county's land use agency.
- c) A vicinity/locator map.
- d) A detailed *Site Development Plan* and directions to the property.
- e) Detailed plans and specifications for the installation of the system. For Construction-Installation permitted systems, the plans must be drawn by the property owner or a [DEQ-licensed installer](#).

2. A Construction-Installation Permit will be issued within 20 days of receiving a completed application. Once you have the permit in hand, you may proceed with the installation of the septic system prescribed in the permit. Any changes must receive approval from the on-site agent for your county.

***Note:** A septic system must be installed and constructed by the owner or a [DEQ-licensed installer](#) using DEQ-approved materials and equipment that meet minimum standards. All equipment must be installed and operated according to the manufacturer's specifications. If you have questions about installers or approved materials and equipment contact Harney County Planning Dept. 541-573-8174*

3. A "pre-cover" inspection (*before* it is covered with soil) of the installation is required unless waived by the on-site agent for your county. Some complex systems, such as sandfilter systems, require inspections at various stages of construction and these inspection requirements are specified in the permit.

To initiate the pre-cover inspection the installer must complete the As-Built Drawing and Materials List form (included in the permit packet) and submit it to your county's on-site agent. This form must be signed by the installer certifying that it was installed according to DEQ specifications. Within seven (7) days of receipt of this completed form, the on-site agent for your county will either waive or conduct the inspection.

After completion of a satisfactory inspection you may cover the installation. You will be sent a Certificate of Satisfactory Completion (CSC) in the mail. Upon receipt of the CSC, you may begin using the septic system.

For more information

Harney County Planning Department at 541-573-8174 or www.co.harney.or.us