

This brochure is provided
by

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and

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SEPTIC SYSTEMS ON RURAL PROPERTY

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SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Is most rural property suitable for a septic system?

Septic systems are generally used anywhere where sewer service is not available. Each land parcel is elevated on its own merits, and the presence of nearby homes does not imply that a property will be approved. Approval of a septic system depends on depth and type of ground water, slopes, soils, presence of wells, surface water and other considerations.

How can I protect myself when purchasing property if I'm not sure it will accommodate a septic system?

When purchasing unimproved property not served by sewer, it's important to have an approval letter or report indicating the property is approved for a septic system. These reports are issued by an agent of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Do I need approval for a system that's already in place?

When purchasing property with an existing septic system, it's recommended that you get an inspection of that system to determine its type, size, condition and location. This will be valuable in planning additions to the house because there are setback requirements for the system.

Systems that are installed and inspected

under permit receive a certificate of satisfactory completion. Check the DEQ office to see if there's one on file for the property in question.

Are there different types of systems? What and who determine which is appropriate for a property?

Several types are available in Oregon, such as standard, steep slope, low-pressure seepage bed, capping fill, seeping trench and sand filter. Their suitability for a particular parcel is determined by the DEQ sanitarian after a site evaluation. For the site evaluation, the applicant provides two test pits 5 feet deep and stepped for access that are 75 feet apart in the area slated for the septic system. After inspecting soils and reviewing other information, the sanitarian will indicate the type of system that's approved for the site.

What do septic systems cost? Is there any way of estimating costs before I buy property?

Cost varies by type of system and location. Generally, a standard system may cost between \$2,000-\$5,000, whereas a sand filter system can run from \$5,000 to more than \$12,000. To estimate costs before the purchase, you must determine the type and size of system required. Get bids from at least two DEQ licensed septic system installers to get an idea of costs in your area.

Who issues and approves system permits? What's my recourse if my permit gets denied?

Septic system construction permits are issued by the DEQ sanitarian. These applications are

generally reviewed by the County Community Development Department to verify compatibility with land use codes.

If the site evaluation results in a denial, and you feel an error has been made, you may ask that an agent of the DEQ review it to assure that procedures were followed properly. In many cases, sites are denied based on conditions such as very high water tables or inadequate area once setbacks are applied to wells and surface waters.

You can apply for a "variance" of the rules in some circumstances where strict compliance with the rule is inappropriate for cause, or special conditions make compliance unreasonable, burdensome or impractical. A variance officer of the DEQ will hold a hearing to review the proposal and determine whether or not it's appropriate.

Will an existing septic system be sufficient if I'm remodeling or replacing an old house with a new one?

DEQ uses the number of bedrooms in a home for calculating waste water flows. If a remodel involves adding bedrooms, a building permit will not be issued until an "authorization notice" is issued. This involves a file review and an inspection of the septic system to verify its condition and location.

For more information contact the:
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