



Homebuyer's Guide to Septic Systems

Inspection Procedure If the home you are buying is on a septic system you should request an inspection and assessment of the system. By law, only a state-licensed septic tank contractor or plumber or a certified environmental health professional can inspect and assess your septic system. The evaluator must provide you a copy of the Department of Health *Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems* and written notice of your right to request an evaluation based on all or part of the standards.

Tank Inspection All system tanks should be pumped and visually inspected to determine their capacity and water tightness. The evaluator will look for cracks, leaks and other defects in the tanks, as well as, required outlet devices or filters and the condition and fit of the lid and access ports. If the tank was pumped and evaluated in the last 5 years that documentation may be used.

Drainfield Inspection The drainfield area should be probed to determine its location, size, configuration, and type of drainfield material. The inspector will note signs of failure and any drainage that impacts the drainfield area. The elevation of the drainfield above the seasonal high watertable should be made as this separation is critical for proper treatment.

Additional Components If your system contains additional components, such as pumps or alarms, they should also be inspected. Dosing pumps should be checked to verify correct operation and alarms are in working order.

Assessment The evaluator will provide you a signed report. The report must indicate if the system is, in the evaluator's opinion, a sanitary nuisance and any maintenance needs. A sample report form is on the reverse side of this information sheet.

Q: Why would I request a voluntary septic system inspection?

A: These systems are underground and may have been out of use for some time. Repairs or system modifications may be costly. A system evaluation would allow these costs to be addressed during sale negotiations.

Q: Where can I obtain a copy of the "Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems?"

A: A copy is available online—www.FloridaHealth.gov under Environmental Health, Onsite Sewage Programs, Forms and Publications.

Q: If the evaluation shows my system is substandard, will I be required to upgrade the system?

A: No. The evaluation is for your use. The department does not receive a copy and no enforcement action will be taken based on the report. The report is intended to let you make an informed decision.

Q: Is a permit required to correct any deficiencies?

A: Yes. All repairs or modifications to an onsite sewage system require a construction permit from the Department of Health, Environmental Health Office in your county.

Q: Does an evaluation assure me that my system will function properly for years to come?

A: No. The evaluation provides an assessment of your system, but is not designed to determine precise code compliance or show that the system will serve your intended use.

Q: If the evaluation was not performed in accordance with the "Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems" what can I do?

A: You may file a complaint with the Department of Health in your county or call the Bureau of Environmental Health at 850-245-4070.

Avoid flushing thousands of dollars in repairs down the drain. Maintain your septic system. Have your septic tank inspected and pumped out every three to five years by a licensed septic tank contractor. To find one, go to FloridaHealth.gov.



Division of Disease Control and Health Protection Bureau of Environmental Health

4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-08 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1710

850.245.4070

www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health

Law Implemented: 381.0065, Florida Statutes. Rule Authority: Chapter 64E-6.001, Florida Administrative Code.

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Voluntary Inspection and Assessment Report

Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of an Existing Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal System

Property Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: Florida Zip: _____

I have ownership, control or use of the onsite sewage treatment and disposal system at the property listed above and request an inspection except for the items I have initialed to request that they be excluded.

Signature of requestor: _____

Printed name of requestor: _____

Tank Inspection:

Owner's initials to request that the tank inspection NOT be included

The tank has been pumped and capacity is: _____ gallons.
 I have waived the pumping requirement because proof of a tank pumping, permitted new installation, permitted repair, or permitted modification can be documented within the previous five years, and the document states the capacity of the tank and that the condition of the tank does not constitute a sanitary nuisance.

My visual inspection of the tank when the tank was empty detected the following cracks, leaks, or other defects:

Baffles or tees are intact and secure: yes no
 Outlet device present not present
 Condition: _____
 Effluent filters present not present
 Condition: _____
 Compartment walls present not present
 Condition: _____
 Structural defects in the tank: _____
 Condition and fit of the tank lid, including manholes: _____

The tank, in my professional opinion, is in danger of being damaged by leaving the tank empty after inspection, and was refilled with water prior to concluding the inspection.

Drainfield Inspection:

Owner's initials to request that the drainfield inspection NOT be included.

I have probed the drainfield area to determine its location and approximate size. Drainfield size: _____ sq. ft.
 Describe drainfield location: _____
 Drainfield configuration: Bed Trench
 Drainfield is made of: Mineral Aggregate Non-mineral aggregate
 Plastic chambers. Indications of previous failure: _____

Is there ponded water within the drainfield? yes no
 Is there even distribution of effluent in the field? yes no
 Are there downspouts or drains that encroach or drain into the drainfield area? yes no
 Based on augering and examining soils in the area of the drainfield, the estimated seasonal high water table in the area of the drainfield is: _____ inches above below the bottom of the drainfield.

Pump, Siphon, Alarm Inspection:

Owner's initials to request that pumps, siphons and alarms NOT be inspected.

Dosing tank integrity: _____ Approximate volume of dosing tank: _____
 Material used in construction of the dosing tank (i.e., concrete, fiberglass, plastic): _____
 Is the pump elevated off the bottom of the chamber? yes no
 Pump operational status: _____
 If there is a check valve, is a purge hole present? yes no

Type of alarm (audio visual both) Location of alarm: _____
 Does the alarm work? yes no
 Do electrical connections appear satisfactory? yes no
 Can surface water infiltrate into the tank? yes no
 Was the pump tank pumped out? yes no

Assessment:

In my professional opinion, the system is is not a sanitary nuisance through:
 allowing the discharge of untreated or improperly treated human waste.
 the improperly built or maintained sewage treatment tank.
 the creation, maintenance or causing of any condition capable of breeding flies, mosquitoes or any other arthropods capable of transmitting diseases directly or indirectly to humans.
 The following maintenance needs to be performed on the system: _____

Disclosure Statements:

I detected cracks, leaks, improper fit or other defects in the tank, manholes or lid. The following damaged or defective item or tank must be properly corrected: _____
 I detected missing or damaged components of the system. The following missing or damaged component must be replaced or an approvable replacement must be reinstalled in the system: _____
 I detected the following previous failure indicators: _____
 I detected ponding of the drainfield or uneven distribution of effluent. The extent of the ponding or uneven distribution is as follows: _____
 I detected the following downspouts or other stormwater or other source of water directed toward the system and they should be re-directed away from the system: _____
 I detected the seasonal high water table at or above the elevation of the drainfield. There is an increased probability of system malfunction due to the presence of groundwater at these levels.
 I detected the following condition or situation existing on the site at the time of the inspection that, in my opinion, would possibly interfere with or restrict any future repair or modification to the existing system: _____

I am a master septic tank contractor registered septic tank contractor state-licensed plumber certified environmental health professional.

Inspection date: _____

Inspector's signature: _____

Inspector's printed name: _____

Inspector's address: _____

A copy of the Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems is required to accompany this report.

Inspectors may use this form or develop their own report that meets the requirements of 381.0065(3)(a), Florida Statutes, and 64E-6.001(5), Florida Administrative Code.