

## What You Must Know: On-Site Sewage Facilities (OSSF) a.k.a “Septic Systems”

### What is an On-Site Sewage Facility (OSSF)?

An OSSF is a private wastewater treatment and disposal systems wholly owned by the property owner. An OSSF must treat and dispose of all the wastewater generated by a given property. Wastewater is not allowed to leave the property. Some OSSF are similar in concept to large public sewage treatment facilities (aerobic treatment units) paired with an approved disposal system (usually a surface application disposal system) and others utilize the native soil to treat and dispose of the wastewater (conventional septic systems). All approved OSSF, including conventional septic systems, can be installed, repaired, and/or extended in the unincorporated (outside of city limits) portions of Denton County provided the property meets the necessary requirements and the property owner obtains the required permit from Denton County.

### When Do I Need A Permit In Denton County?

A permit is needed to install, repair, extend or alter (in any manner) an OSSF in the unincorporated portions of Denton County. Permit fees range from \$310 for new systems to \$100 for repairs or other modifications.

### What Does Denton County Environmental Health Do?

The Environmental Health Division of Denton County Public Health recommends and promotes adequate improvements of sanitation on public and private premises by performing specialized inspections relating to all OSSF in the unincorporated portions of Denton County. This involves reviewing plans for all OSSF installations, repairs or alterations; as well as, the issuance of permits to construct and final inspections before the systems are buried. On a newly construction OSSF, inspectors advise contractors and property owners of the corrective steps needed to comply with applicable laws and regulations. Additionally, this office is responsible for investigating complaints on properties with existing OSSF. Denton County inspectors conduct their actions in a courteous and respectable manner—ever vigilant to observe and respect personal and private liberties due every citizen of Denton County.

### What are the Requirements to Secure a Permit to Construct a new OSSF?

1. A **Floodplain Development Permit** may be required by the Denton County Planning Department before an OSSF permit will be issued.
2. A **Culvert Permit** may be required by the Denton County Planning Department before an OSSF permit will be issued.
3. A **Permit to Construct an OSSF** is required before OSSF construction begins. An application and all supporting documentation should be fully completed and submitted in person. In most cases, permits can be issued on the same day. The permit fee is \$310.00. Fees are non-refundable and are to be paid at the time of application.
4. Major supporting documentation needed to obtain a **Permit to Construct**:
  - Floodplain Development Permit when it is required.
  - Culvert Permit when it is required.
  - Fully completed Denton County OSSF application.
  - Design Criteria. It must show that an OSSF can be, in actual fact, installed on the property and the OSSF will meet all of the requirements of Denton County Public Health and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

- Site Evaluation (site plan and the soil textural classification)—must be provided by individual private contractors that are hired by the property owners. The following qualifications are required to conduct site evaluations:
  - Licensed Professional Engineer
  - or
  - Licensed Site Evaluator that holds a Registered Sanitarian License.
- A valid OSSF **Maintenance Contract** when required.
- All applicable Affidavits fully completed and filed with the County Clerk when required.

5. Every OSSF permit will need a final inspection. The final inspection must be performed by Denton County Environmental Health. At the time of inspection, the contracted licensed installer should have the tanks in place (DO NOT BACKFILL AROUND TANKS), water in the tanks, drainfields constructed, “houseline” connected to tank, an instrument set-up and suitable backfill material on location (if required). To set the appointment for the final inspection, this office must be contacted at least 2 days before the final inspection.

6. The owner of the property will be issued a Notice of Approval after the final inspection. The owner of the property is required to have the Notice of Approval, in hand, before the facility is put in operation.

#### What is the Property Owners Obligation?

Everything -- an OSSF is a private on-site sewage facility wholly owned by the property owner. Property owners have the obligation to keep the OSSF in safe and sound working order. Information is available from the manufactures of every system or at least the manufactures of each system component. Extensive rules and regulations exist governing every facet of an OSSF—even out in the unincorporated portions of Denton County. None of the rules or regulations do anything unless the property owner knows them and takes responsibility for their OSSF.

#### What about Maintenance of Aerobic Treatment Units?

Property owners with Aerobic Treatment systems must continuously maintain a signed written contract with a valid maintenance company and submit a copy of the contract to the Denton County Environmental Health Division at least thirty (30) days prior to expiration of the previous contract or have written approval from this department showing approved homeowner training.

#### Will Denton County Repair an OSSF?

No -- Denton County makes no guarantee that an approved On-Site Sewage Facility will provide satisfactory service. It is the property owner’s responsibility to provide for the full and correct function of each and every OSSF on their property. The property owner shall keep people and pets away from the components of an OSSF including tanks, lids and all of the disposal areas. Additionally, the property owner is responsible for keeping the area around the tanks and the disposal areas free of any structures, parking areas, gravel, concrete, vegetable gardens, trees, or anything that may interfere with the evaporation and evapotranspiration of the wastewater.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact our office.

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