



LICKING COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

WIC (740) 349-6474 ENVIRONMENTAL (740) 349-6475 NURSING (740) 349-6476 FAX (740) 349-6510

Sewage Treatment System Operation and Maintenance Program Frequently Asked Questions (updated 11.2015)

- Q. Can a Licking County Health Department employee (Public Health employee) inspect a property without providing notice to the property owner of the inspection?
- A. Yes, the Health Department's Public Health Sanitarians can inspect a property without providing notice to the property owner. As a condition of the permit obtained when the household sewage treatment was installed, property owners must allow the Health Department access to sewage systems to conduct inspections of the systems. When the Operation and Maintenance program begins in 2017-2018, if the homeowner does not provide a proof of inspection by a qualified service provider within the one- or ~~proposed~~ five-year cycles for the system type, the Health Department will conduct the inspection and a \$45.00 fee will be charged to the property owner.
- Q. How will the type of sewage system be determined for my property if the current system requires maintenance or replacement?
- A. Most system failures will require the repair or replacement of failed components to restore the system to its original operating design. Occasionally there will be more severe failures identified that may require partial or complete system replacement. The design will be based on the number of bedrooms in the home, and the soil and site conditions on the lot. The system type and size will be determined based on the requirements in the Ohio Administrative Code 3701-29. Additionally, if the Health Department is inspecting areas and high failure rates are reported for a concentration area of the community, the department will work with local officials to evaluate the possibility of a public sewage system in the area.
- Q. What happens if a property owner denies property access? What is the justification for access of the property for the Health Department?
- A. If a property owner denies the Health Department access to inspect the sewage treatment system on a property, the Health Department will attempt to work with the property owner to make arrangements for access. If the property owner still prohibits the Health Department from completing the inspection(s) required according to Ohio Revised Code Section 3718, the Health Department will then consult with the Licking County prosecutor's office to receive access for inspection.
- Q. How long will a property owner be provided to bring a system into compliance if the system is determined to need repairs?
- A. The timeline will vary depending on the health impact. The Health Department will work with property owners to establish individual timelines based on the type of failure, the complexity of the repair, soil conditions, and the impact the failure is causing on the community's health. The Health Department's objective is to work with property owners as much as possible to bring their systems into compliance.
- Q. Who provided input for the new law, and the regulations proposed to enforce it?
- A. The Ohio Department of Health worked with community stakeholder groups, industry representatives, local health departments and the public to develop the sewage regulations changes in Ohio Revised Code Section 3718. During the development period the Ohio Department of Health opened periods for public comment, allowing the public to provide feedback on the regulations. Ohio Administrative Code 3701-29 contains the statewide rules that were adopted following an extensive planning and feedback period.
- Q. What happens if the property owner is unable to make the deadline(s)?
- A. The same process that has been in place for the last 40 years will be enforced. A property owner is required to properly maintain the sewage system serving any occupied structure. If they fail to make the repairs in a timely manner or do not develop a compliance plan by working with the Health Department, the case will eventually be referred to the county prosecutor for enforcement.
- Q. What happens if a property owner cannot afford the required repairs/replacements determined from inspections?
- A. The Health Department is applying for financial assistance to help property owners who are income eligible with the cost of possible repairs and replacements.

- Q. How is the cost of the repairs, and/or replacements, determined?
- A. Property owners are encouraged to get a minimum of three estimates from registered septic installers for the cost of repairs prior to having work completed on their systems. Numerous private companies/contactors are available for repairs and/or replacements to ensure competitive pricing. Costs are not established by the Health Department.
- Q. What appeal process is there for property owners who would like their inspection(s) reviewed?
- A. The department is the property owner's first contact for appeal through the Environmental Health Director, and then the Health Commissioner. No additional fees will be charged for quality checks and reviews. If the property owner is not satisfied, they can appeal to the Board of Health. Ultimately, they can file an appeal with the Sewage Appeals Review Board, according to Ohio Revised Code Section 3718-03 if questions/concerns still exist.
- Q. Where does the financial assistance that may be available to assist homeowners come from?
- A. If awarded, the financial assistance will be available from the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund, which is overseen by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. Additional financial assistance may be available through the Licking County Planning Commission for income qualifying property owners.
- Q. How were the fees determined? Is there a possibility in the future the fees will change?
- A. The fees were determined according to Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3709.09. The Health Department's fees are based on administrative costs and field work costs to implement the program. The Health Department reviews its fees annually based on historical data, and makes adjustments according to the needs of its programs. Therefore, as the sewage operation and management program is implemented in the community, the department will begin tracking data to ensure the fees are appropriate for the program's cost.
- Q. If a property owners ops to inspect their own systems, who provides the trainings and what is the cost of the training?
- A. For property owners who have systems utilizing a septic tank, the department will provide training opportunities at no cost. For property owners who have aeration systems, the manufacturer of their system may have a system-specific training required to become an inspector. The department is working with the manufactures of the common aeration systems in the county to arrange more training options for property owners. The property owner will also need to pass an exam to demonstrate that they understand the sewage regulations.
- Q. How will the Licking County Health Department ensure self-reporting of systems is accurate if a home owner ops to do their own inspections?
- A. The department will complete a small number of quality checks to ensure homeowner and service providers are accurately reporting the system conditions. These are provided to the property owner at no cost for inspection.
- Q. How much does it cost to have a third-party inspector complete the inspections? Are their prices determined by the Licking County Board of Health?
- A. A third-party inspector can set their pricing based on their business model. The Board of Health will not determine what private companies charge for inspections and repairs. Any company conducting inspections must be registered.
- Q. If a third-party inspects a sewage system for a private homeowner, are they required to report this to the Licking County Health Department?
- A. Each time a tank is pumped, an inspection is performed, or a service is provided, the contractor is required to submit documentation to the Health Department.
- Q. Does the Licking County Health Department plan on hiring additional staff for this program? How does the Department plan on completing these inspections?
- A. The department does not plan to hire additional staff at this time in order to keep operational cost low. The department will complete an annual review of the program to track costs and demands, and adjustments to the program will be made accordingly at that time. Staffing requirements will depend on how many homeowners have their inspections performed by third parties.
- Q. When do the fees begin?
- A. The earliest fees will be billed in 2017 for 2018 inspections. Only homeowners who choose not to have a service provider inspect their system and do not complete the required steps to inspect their own system will be charged an inspection fee by the Health Department. Additionally, the first inspection is free if inspected by the Health Department.
- Q. Does the Licking County Health Department have a list of all sewage systems in the county that require inspection? If not, how does the Department plan to attain a list?
- A. No. The department has no record of sewage systems installed before 1970. The department plans on developing the inventory of sewage systems by completing inventory inspections. This inventory inspection (or first inspection) is free for the property owner. Additionally, new-builds and property transfers will automatically be enrolled.
- Q. How does the Licking County Health Department plan to notify the communities when they begin inspections in local areas within the county?
- A. The department will put out a public release to notify communities. Residents are encouraged to visit www.lickingcohealth.org to register to receive department releases. Additionally, the department will work with communities and officials to provide public meetings at the request of a community. Requests can be made through the department's Public Information Officer, at (740) 349-6535.