



ISLAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

P.O. Box 5000
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www.islandcounty.net/health

New Regulations Regarding Homeowner Onsite Sewage Disposal (septic) System Inspection Requirements

Dear Homeowner:

For cost efficiency, the Island County Health Department (ICHD) has partnered with the Island County Assessor's Office to communicate this important information to you.

Living in Island County provides a wonderful way of life in a beautiful place. Along with this privilege comes the responsibility to protect our islands and fragile water resources. Three-quarters of our population use groundwater as a drinking water source. The same population uses a septic system to treat and dispose of their wastewater. The cost to replace a septic system can exceed \$20,000. Caring for your septic system will ensure the protection of our drinking water supply, the protection of streams, lakes and the marine environment, and protect your investment.

New regulations are in effect regarding how septic systems are maintained in Washington, and we wanted to take this opportunity to explain these changes.

In the summer of 2005 the Washington State Board of Health revised the state rules for septic systems. One of the more significant changes included in the rule revision was the responsibility for owners of septic systems to have their systems inspected regularly and report the results to the local health department. The Island County Health Department is responsible for implementing the rules locally. Our efforts include maintaining a licensing program for professional inspectors, maintaining a homeowner inspection training program (HOST), reviewing each inspection report and responding to problems identified in the report, managing a low-interest loan program for septic repairs, managing the collection of inspection reports, and developing education and outreach materials.

The frequency of septic inspections is determined by the type of system serving your property. Conventional gravity systems require an inspection once every three years. All other septic systems require annual inspections. Inspections must be performed by a licensed Maintenance Service Provider, except homeowners with conventional systems who become certified through the HOST – Homeowner Septic Training program, can conduct their own inspections. You can visit our website at www.islandcounty.net/health to obtain a list of licensed Maintenance Service Providers. If you are interested in the HOST program you can call our HOST informational phone line at 360-678-5111 ext. 6094, to obtain general information. We will be expanding this program over the next year to ensure that we have the ability to meet the public's demand for self-inspections.

When an inspection is submitted to ICHD a \$62 review fee will be collected to cover the costs of managing the inspection program.

The ICHD understands that these new regulations represent a significant change in the way owners of septic systems manage their property. Please do not hesitate to contact our office with questions or concerns you may have. On the reverse side of this letter, you will find some frequently asked questions as well as other available resources that you may find helpful.