DPS | Montgomery County
Department of Permitting Services
2425 Reedie Dr 7th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902
Phone: 311 in Montgomery County or (240)777-0311
https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dps/

Types of Septic Systems

Each property in the County is served by either the WSSC public sewer system or a private septic system. There are approx. 20,000 properties served by septic systems in Montgomery County.

There are several types of conventional septic systems that may be approvable for installation to serve a new or existing structure in the County. The types of conventional septic systems include: drywells (seepage pits), deep or shallow trenches, conventional sandmounds, and at-grade mounds.

There are also several types of non-conventional septic systems that may be approvable for installation to fix a failing septic system only. Properties served by these types of systems are not eligible for building permit approvals that increase living space. Please refer to our Guideline for Septic System Repairs for more information on the repair process. Non-conventional septic systems are not approvable for new construction. Please refer to our Non-Conventional Septic Systems Guideline for more information.

Drywells

A drywell (or seepage pit) is a type of septic system that is generally suitable only in ideal soil conditions. Drywells are no longer installed. The drywell was the type of septic system most commonly installed to serve homes built in the 1940's thru the 1960's. The drywell is a cylindrical structure usually no more than fifteen (15) feet deep and twelve (12) feet in diameter. The structure is constructed of either staggered cinder blocks or cement well rings with clean gravel added to the interior and exterior of the walls. Drywells are installed entirely below the ground surface.

Trenches

Deep or shallow trench systems are currently the most commonly installed type of septic system in the County. The design specifications (depth and linear footage) of a trench system are determined by percolation test results and topography. Trenches are usually two or three feet in width, with varying depth and stone volume. Perforated pipe is placed in the trenches to allow transport of sewage effluent into the trenches soil for proper filtration. Trenches are installed entirely below the ground surface.

Conventional Sandmounds

Sandmound septic systems are a type of septic system that are partially above the ground surface. Please refer to our Sandmound Guideline for more information.

At-Grade Mounds

An at-grade mound is a septic system that utilizes a raised bed of gravel or stone over the natural soils surface with a pressure distribution system to equally distribute effluent along the length of the gravel bed. Sitse with large trees or surface rocks may be unacceptable for installing an at-grade system.