

**DPS**Montgomery County  
Department of Permitting Services

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Phone: 311 in Montgomery County or (240)777-0311  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dps/>

## Septic System Repair Guidelines

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### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

1. Submit an application for a Septic Repair Permit online via DPS eServices.
  - If available, submit a copy of a house location survey or similar scaled site plan.
  - For applications submitted as a result of a failed septic inspection for real estate transfer, submit a copy of the septic inspection report.
2. A qualified septic contractor must be secured by the property owner. The contractor must contact the area inspector for scheduling the septic repair evaluation.

*\*\*\*Please be advised that Montgomery County Well and Septic Section does not license or certify septic contractors. Property owners are encouraged to seek competitive bids from multiple contractors, as well as references from previous customers, prior to hiring a contractor. \*\*\**

### **SEPTIC REPAIR EVALUATION PROCESS**

A standard septic repair evaluation includes exposing all components of the existing septic system for inspection. A qualified contractor must expose the system components as determined necessary by the inspector. A septic permit will **not** be issued until the septic repair evaluation/perc test has been completed.

#### **Failing Septic Tanks**

- A failing septic tank will be verified by the county inspector. Conditions that may constitute a tank as 'failing' may include: tanks constructed of cinderblock, tanks installed deep with too much cover, leaking tanks, etc.
- A septic tank replacement will not be permitted without verifying that the existing drainfield is in acceptable condition. If the inspector determines that the existing trenches or seepage pit(s) are not acceptable to remain, then it will also be necessary to replace these components.

#### **Failing Drainfields**

- If the property has an approved septic reserve area, then additional percolation testing may not be necessary to complete design of the replacement drainfield.
- If the property does not have an approved septic reserve area, or if there are no percolation test records on file, then it shall be necessary for the inspector to conduct percolation testing as part of the repair evaluation in order to replace the drainfield.

#### **Percolation Testing**

- Percolation test holes shall be excavated as directed by the inspector, with testing conducted to establish sufficient area to install a replacement septic system;
- If sufficient percolation test results are obtained for a conventional septic system installation, the inspector shall design and issue the septic repair permit to the property owner.
- If percolation test results are not suitable for a conventional septic system repair, then alternative septic system repair options shall be explored.

## **Permit Issuance, Installation and Final Approval**

- A septic permit is issued to the property owner once a complete septic repair evaluation is completed.
- The installer must schedule a pre-construction meeting with the area inspector to ensure proper installation of the system. The installer shall request all required inspections as needed and if any deviation from the permit becomes necessary. All installers must be registered with the MD Board of On-Site Wastewater Professionals.
- The replacement system will be sized to accommodate the existing house; installation and approval of the repair system shall in no way imply approval for expansion of the existing house.
- In some instances, other conditions may be attached to the permit, including the requirement that any existing water well may have to be properly abandoned and replaced to accommodate the septic repair.
- A final certification of the septic system shall be issued once the system installation is complete, all required inspections are performed, and all permit conditions have been satisfied.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### ***Q: What happens if my septic inspection for property transfer failed due to a cinderblock tank?***

**A:** Cinderblock tanks are not considered acceptable by state or industry standards. Replacement of the septic tank is not enforceable by the county unless a public health nuisance is present. Terms of the same between the buyer and seller, or lender, often dictate the terms of replacing the septic tank. The county is not a party to this decision. If a septic repair application is submitted, the cinderblock tank will be verified by the county inspector prior to issuance of a permit to replace the tank.

### ***Q: How long will it take to schedule and conduct the repair evaluation?***

**A:** A repair evaluation is typically scheduled within 5-10 business days after the application is submitted. The evaluation is completed in one day.

### ***Q: What if my settlement date conflicts with completion of the septic repair permit process?***

**A:** All reasonable efforts will be made to complete the septic repair permit prior to the sale of a house. However, based on contractor availability, weather conditions, and staff workload, it may be necessary to postpone the date of settlement in order to conduct a proper evaluation and complete installation of the replacement septic system.

### ***Q: Can I elect to install a larger replacement system than what it is necessary?***

**A:** The property owner may request a larger septic tank and/or drainfield if conditions allow. However, installation of a larger system shall in no way constitute approval for future improvements and/or expansions. An increase in number of bedrooms and/or habitable space may still require a modern septic reserve area to be created which requires additional soils testing, plans, fees, etc. Please consult with staff.

### ***Q: What if the percolation test results are not suitable for a conventional septic system?***

**A:** If soil conditions are not suitable to design a conventional replacement system, the process for an innovative or alternative system will be initiated. This process includes securing a private designer to conduct further soils testing, and co-review by Maryland Department of the Environment.

### ***Q: Will I receive a certificate or documentation regarding approval of the replacement system?***

**A:** Yes. A certificate will be issued and an 'as-built' drawing will be made available once all required inspections are performed and all permit conditions have been satisfied