

Tunkhannock Township

Sewage Enforcement

Permit Application Procedures

Processing an application for an onlot sewage disposal system permit includes four stages. These are:

- 1) [Preliminary Stage](#)- Initial meeting between applicant and SEO and completion of Part 1 of the permit application.
- 2) [Site Evaluation Stage](#)- SEO determines site suitability.
- 3) [System Design Stage](#)- The applicant selects the type of system, the SEO reviews the design, and if approved, the permit is issued.
- 4) [Installation and Final Inspection Stage](#)- The applicant installs the approved system, and upon inspection of the system by the SEO, the applicant is given permission to cover and use the system. The applicant should not be allowed to occupy the structure until the SEO gives explicit permission to cover and use the system. Building permits should not be issued until all sewage disposal issues are resolved.

Each of these stages will be discussed below, and in later sections of this chapter, the activities in each stage will also be related to guidelines for reimbursement and to the requirements for filing and maintaining necessary sewage records.

Preliminary Stage

The applicant must obtain an application form from the local agency and complete "Part I, General Information" of the form, providing accurate and complete information for each item. It is advisable that the SEO talk with the applicant at this stage to make sure that the applicant understands the permitting process. The local agency must have hand-out sheets available explaining the process and any and all fees for services.

When the applicant returns the form to the local agency, the local agency should collect the permit fee and make appropriate entries in the receipts journal. After determining that Part I is complete and correct, the SEO should enter the application in a log sheet or book and schedule the site visit and soils evaluation.

- Sample [Application for an On-lot Sewage Disposal System Permit](#) (This is a State form and the originals must be used. Original forms must be picked up in-person)
- Sample [Site Investigation and Percolation Test Report for On-Lot Disposal of Sewage](#) (This is a State form and the originals must be used. Original forms must be picked up in-person)

Site Evaluation Stage

The applicant is responsible for having the site prepared for inspection, which includes the digging of test pits and percolation holes, in compliance with the local agency requirements. For the best service and efficiency, soils evaluations should occur with the backhoe on site in case additional soil probes are needed.

Some local agencies automatically charge a fee to the applicant for digging the percolation holes and test pits. Local agencies should be reminded that expenses related to the preparation of the site are not eligible costs for reimbursement. Therefore, if the local agency does provide this service, the applicant should be charged the full cost of the service. If the local agency provides this service, it should also have municipal liability and casualty insurance to cover such activities.

Each application must contain actual data verified at the site by the SEO. Soil probes must be conducted at the site to verify the depth of the seasonal water table and/or rock formations or other limiting zones. If the SEO's evaluation of the soil probe indicates that the site is unsuitable, a percolation test is unnecessary (because its primary function is to size the system) and the application is denied. It is only necessary to conduct percolation tests on those sites with approved soils evaluations.

When the SEO has completed the site investigation and observed or conducted the percolation tests, the SEO completes both Part II of the application form and form ER-BWQ-290 Appendix A, "Site Investigation and Percolation Test Report for Onlot Disposal of Sewage."

If the site is suitable and a permit issued, the SEO should notify the applicant, preferably by letter, indicating that the applicant can proceed with system design. If the site is unsuitable, the SEO must notify the applicant by letter that the permit was denied. If the permit is denied because of an unsuitable site, the SEO should file the various copies of the application form. These files will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The applicant has a right of appeal to the local agency board.

System Design Stage

The system design stage involves the applicant's completion of Part III, "Plot Plan and System Design" of the application. The permit-issuing local agency's SEO may not design the system. The applicant will need the services of a professional designer and in some cases a professional engineer to prepare the plot plan, system design, and specifications. Based on the site evaluation, the applicant determines the most appropriate and proper methods for primary and secondary treatment and checks the selected methods in Part III of the form. Chapters 73 of the department's regulations provide criteria for determining which methods of sewage treatment may be used.

The applicant must provide a sewage treatment system design in sufficient detail for an installer to follow without resorting to other documents. There also must be enough information for the SEO to decide whether the system complies with Chapter 73.

Upon return of the form, the SEO determines whether the information is both complete and correct. If not, the SEO returns the form to the applicant for corrections, along with a letter spelling out the deficiencies, within seven days. If the form and design are complete and correct, the SEO makes a decision, within 15 days of receipt of the design, of whether or not a permit should be issued.

When a permit is denied, the SEO must notify the applicant of the denial, the reasons for the denial, and the applicant's right to appeal. This letter should be carefully written because the appeal could eventually lead to court action. In difficult cases, the SEO should discuss the matter with the local agency's attorney.

The permit form and the yellow copy of the application form are returned to the applicant. The white and green copies are kept together and placed in the "Pending" file until installation and final inspection, and the pink copy is forwarded to the department's regional office.

Installation and Final Inspection Stage

Construction and installation of the system and the building which it serves must be started within three years from the date the permit is issued. The local agency should notify, by letter, those persons whose permits have expired that they need to obtain a new permit.

No part of any system may be covered until it is inspected and given final written approval by the SEO. The applicant must notify the SEO when the installation is complete and ready for inspection. The applicant may cover the installation upon receipt of written approval by the local agency, or, in the absence of written approval or disapproval, at the expiration of 72 hours, excluding Sundays and holidays, from the local agency's receipt of notice to inspect. The local agency's SEO may inspect and make tests at any time before, during, or after construction and may require an installation to be uncovered if it was covered prior to receiving final approval.

When satisfied with the installation, the SEO signs the permit form and the system may be covered. The SEO places the white copy of the application form in the "Final or Completed Permits" file; the applicant receives the yellow copy of the permit; and the green copy is placed in the "Reimbursement" file. If the system is not installed according to the approved design and corrections are not immediately made, the permit is revoked and the SEO writes a letter to the applicant explaining why the permit was revoked.