

3 Inspect Your System



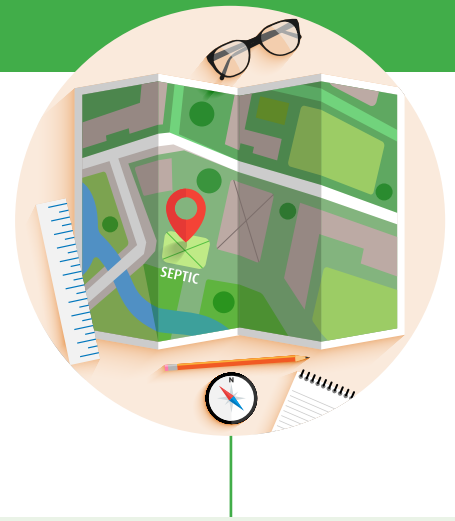
Why get an assessment?

There are a number of situations that require or benefit from a thorough assessment of your system. You may not know the condition of your system components, where they are located, or you may be considering a renovation or selling your home. If you have never done maintenance on your system other than pumping out the tank, an assessment is a good place to start.

Know the location of your system

If you aren't aware of the location of all of your system components, there are a number of things that could go wrong:

1. You won't be prepared in the case of an emergency. A blockage could occur and sewage might start backing up into your home.
2. You could mistakenly build on top of and/or cause negative impacts to the functioning of your system.
3. You will spend more money. If you are able to locate and expose components, hiring a maintenance provider will cost less.



CREATE A DIAGRAM OF YOUR SYSTEM

During maintenance you can measure the distance from each component and sketch it on graph paper or have your provider make one for you.

TYPES OF INSPECTIONS

Maintenance Assessments

This is a type of performance inspection done for a homeowner to learn the location, condition and operation of all system components. The authorized inspector will develop or adjust the maintenance plan for the system, including a recommended pump-out frequency based on current conditions. This is a common assessment for new homeowners to undertake, and for existing system owners who realize they aren't familiar with their septic system. The inspector will compare your system to the regulation of its day to ensure it is "operating as intended by design". Homeowners don't need to fear that they will be expected to upgrade to today's standards, unless their system needs a major repair. Provincial regulation requires that when upgrading a system for a new use, a higher Daily Design Flow, or when replacing the system, it be done to today's standards.

Real Estate Inspections

When property transfers ownership, it is an important time to have an inspection of the system. Buyers need to be aware of the condition of the system before purchase. Proactive sellers can have an inspection report available for prospective buyers to make the transaction go smoothly. In some cases, a financial lender will require an inspection before finalizing the mortgage.

Compliance Inspections

A compliance inspection is often required to support a building permit. This type of inspection is done to review details about the property, anticipated changes to the use of the system, as well as the condition of the system. A recommendation as to whether the system is sufficient or will need to be upgraded to support the new use will then be made.

What will an inspection do?

An inspection will determine or include:

- a. System type (1, 2 or 3)
- b. Explain the expected function, as well as the actual function and condition of each component
- c. General location of components on the property
- d. Location of any utilities in the vicinity of the onsite system
- e. Review of all existing permit/filing documents and comparison with the system as installed
- f. Review of all existing maintenance records
- g. Review current or expected usage information collected from the occupant against the designed abilities of the onsite system
- h. Completion of a detailed report to the client on the condition, performance, and suitability for intended use and recommended or required repairs, maintenance or improvements to the system

Understanding Your Assessment

An assessment will include recommendations for improvements, repairs and cautions. It will also tell you if your system is the following:

“This system is operating in a normal manner as intended by its design”

Your system is in good working order.

“This system is operating, but a partial restriction or backing up is occurring”

Your system is partially working but needs maintenance or repairs.

“Performance malfunction”

Your system has a malfunction that needs fixing.

“Illegal or prohibited feature”

Your system is working in a prohibited manner.

“Potential health or safety hazard”

Your system poses a safety or health hazard to yourself or those in your environment.

Q: Do I need to submit filing documents for minor repairs to my system?

A: No, but you should check to ensure the repairs are minor and that they do not require the submission of filing documents. Types of repairs that do not need filing documents include broken lid on the distribution box, broken effluent pump, replace float switch, installation of an effluent filter or replacing a short section (10 feet) of crushed distribution line. Examples of repairs that require filing documents to be submitted include: replacing the distribution field, replacing the septic tank or changing from gravity distribution to pressure distribution.

— Island Health