

Why has the CRD implemented a bylaw to regulate maintenance of septic systems?

On May 31, 2005, the provincial government introduced a new sewerage system regulation. The regulation applies to site assessments and the installation and maintenance of all types of onsite wastewater systems, including septic systems for single family homes. In cooperation with participating municipalities, the Capital Regional District (CRD) developed Bylaw No. 3479 in response to the new regulation.



This bylaw ensures regular maintenance of our region's systems which will help to prevent the public health risks and environmental degradation associated with poorly maintained onsite septic systems.

What is the difference between Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3 septic systems?

In 2005, when the provincial government changed the regulations governing septic systems, it divided them into Type 1, 2 and 3 categories. Type 1 is treatment by septic tank only whereby the sewage is held in the tank before heading into a drainfield. It may be gravity fed or pumped into the drainfield. Type 2 and Type 3 systems introduce further treatment in order to produce a higher quality effluent that can be discharged into a smaller drainfield. Type 2 and Type 3 systems are often used where there are site or soil constraints that prevent a Type 1 from being used. These systems are often referred to as package treatment plants and they have mechanical and electrical parts that require more frequent maintenance than Type 1 systems.

What do homeowners need to do?

Bylaw 3479 requires owners in the municipalities of Saanich, Langford, Colwood and View Royal with Type 2 or Type 3 systems (package treatment plants) to maintain their system according to the maintenance plan for the system, and ensure it is maintained by an Authorized Person at least once per calendar year. A Certification of Maintenance form must be completed by an Authorized Person and sent in to the CRD annually. A copy of this form must also be retained by owners and be available to the CRD upon request.

What is a Certification of Maintenance form and why is it required?

A Certification of Maintenance form is used to document the annual maintenance of your onsite sewage system. Under CRD Bylaw 3479, owners of onsite sewage systems are required to have their system maintained by an Authorized Person at least once per calendar year. Owners must ensure an Authorized Person completes this form annually and sends it in to the CRD.

How frequently should maintenance take place?

Most of the manufacturers' recommendations for Type 2 systems recommend maintenance 2 - 3 times per year, more for Type 3 systems. We advise that you follow the manufacturers' recommendations. Under the CRD Bylaw, Type 2 and 3 systems are required to be maintained by an Authorized Person at least once per calendar year.

How can I save money on regular maintenance and monitoring?

Many registered practitioners provide maintenance and monitoring at a reduced cost if your septic system is under a maintenance contract. If you contract a maintenance provider to maintain your system once or twice a year, this may require an initial visit at a higher cost (in order for them to fully examine the condition of the septic system and determine what maintenance is required) but they will become familiar with your system and be able to maintain it more cost effectively.

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Who can do work on a septic system?

As of May 31, 2005, under the BC Health Act Sewerage System Regulation, only an Authorized Person can design, plan, construct or do maintenance work on an onsite sewage system in BC. An Authorized Person is defined as a Professional Engineer or Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner (ROWP) with education or experience in onsite sewage system construction and maintenance.

The Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC (ASTTBC) is the provincial registering body for Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioners (ROWPs). They are committed to ensuring ROWPs meet practice requirements with professionalism and integrity. To find a qualified ROWP in your area, please visit the ASTTBC website at: <http://owrp.asttbc.org/c/finder.php> or call 1-877-456-ROWP (7697).

The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (APEGBC) maintains a list of professional engineers, geoscientists and licensees undertaking services as *Professionals* under the Regulation, complete with contact information for the general public who require the services of a Professional in this area. Under the Regulation, construction or maintenance of a **Type 3** system must be under the supervision of a Professional. A list of Professionals can be found online at: <http://www.apeg.bc.ca/members/sewerageprolist.html>

What are the Costs?

The current industry costs on Vancouver Island are estimated to be as follows:

Maintenance and monitoring:	\$400 - \$760 per visit (\$55 per hour) (\$100 - \$800 per year)
Private inspection:	\$350 - \$650 (\$60 per hour plus travel)
Pumping a septic tank:	\$180 - \$600 (depending on size of tank)

Everyone has to pay for either septic or sewer maintenance. Those who are hooked up to sanitary sewer pay their municipality to maintain that sewer system. Please contact your municipality for more information on sewer fees.

Are inspections required by the CRD?

No, however, owners are encouraged to have their system inspected. Ultimately, homeowners are responsible for the proper functioning of their system. Under provincial regulation, owners are responsible for preventing their sewerage system from causing or contributing to a health hazard (the discharge of sewage into a source of drinking water, surface waters, tidal water or onto land).

Each component of the system from the tank to the field should be examined on a regular basis by an Authorized Person to determine that it is structurally sound and functioning correctly and that any mechanical or electrical parts are in good working order. Many typical problems can be corrected with some maintenance work but, if ignored, can result in the need for an expensive repair or replacement system.

More information?

For more information on the CRD bylaw or septic systems, please go online to www.crd.bc.ca/septic, call our septic information line at 250-360-3187 or email septic@crd.bc.ca.

To find a qualified ROWP in your area, please visit the ASTTBC website at: <http://owrp.asttbc.org/c/finder.php> or call 1-877-456-ROWP (7697).

To report a malfunctioning septic system or for installation plans and drawings contact Island Health (VIHA) at 250-519-3401.