



Selecting Property for a Home Site

July 2012

When searching for a place to build a new home, it is important to consider how you will manage the household wastewater that will be produced from the home. Lack of planning for the sewage treatment system can cause unforeseen expenses or even delays in the construction of your new home. Considering how your wastewater will be treated before buying the property could save time and money when you are ready to begin construction.



What do I need to know about wastewater treatment and disposal before I buy property?

If public sanitary sewer lines are accessible and available to the property, any home built on the property must be connected to the sanitary sewer line. If public sanitary sewer lines are not accessible and available, you will need to install an on-site sewage treatment system for any home built on the lot. In most cases, the sewage treatment system installed for a home must include a soil-based component for final treatment and dispersal of sewage effluent.

The soil absorption component of a sewage treatment system must be located on the lot where the soil is most conducive for treating, absorbing and dispersing wastewater. There are also a number of minimum isolation distances that must be met when siting the sewage treatment system, private water well (if applicable), and home on the lot.

In addition to selecting a location for the home on the lot, it is important to consider the sewage treatment system requirements when evaluating the property for possible future developments, such as construction of driveways, room additions, swimming pool, or outbuildings (e.g. sheds, barns, etc.).

How do I know what type of sewage treatment system I need?

The local health department with jurisdiction must permit any household sewage treatment system that is installed on the property. The health department will use information from a site and soil evaluation to determine what types of household sewage treatment system are appropriate for the lot. *It is recommended that you have a site and soil evaluation completed **before** you purchase the property* to ensure that the site is buildable and to give some idea of what type(s) of system may be considered for the site. In some cases, a site and soil evaluation may have already been completed when the lot was created and may be on file with the local health department or available from the seller.

Consult with the local health department and a sewage system designer to determine the specifics of the sewage treatment system that will be required for the soil conditions on a building lot. This will also give you the information you need to get an estimate on the cost of installing a sewage treatment system. Lots with difficult site or soil conditions may require complex sewage systems. Pumps and alternative systems may be required when conditions prohibit the use of a conventional sewage treatment system.

Who does the site and soil evaluation?

Site and soil evaluations should be conducted by a certified soil scientist or a sanitarian working for the local health department with jurisdiction where the lot is located. Contact your local health department for a list of site and soil evaluators.

How much room do I need for a sewage treatment system?

The information from the site and soil evaluation will be used to determine the location, size, shape, and orientation of the sewage treatment system in the lot. All of these factors are dependent on the topography of the site and the soil's ability to absorb and disperse the wastewater. In addition, regulations require that enough space be reserved on the property for the complete relocation of the sewage treatment system when the system needs to be replaced in the future.

Who can install the sewage treatment system?

Household sewage treatment system installers must be licensed or registered with the local health department that has jurisdiction where the lot is located. Installation of the sewage treatment system cannot begin until the design is approved and a permit has been issued by the local health department. It is recommended that you meet with the sewage treatment system contractor and home builder on site to discuss the location and layout of the sewage treatment system and home before any construction begins. This will ensure that all parties are aware of the requirements for the sewage treatment system and prevent any conflicts or damage from occurring before it's too late. This will also help to prevent any unforeseen costs from arising due to unexpected changes in system type or design.

It is extremely important that all contractors and excavators building the home fully understand the location of all components of the sewage treatment system and replacement area so they can be protected from and disturbances that could damage the soil during the construction process. Failure to protect the areas designated for the primary and replacement sewage treatment systems could destroy the soil necessary for wastewater absorption and may render the property unusable for a sewage treatment system.



Where can I get more information?

**Ohio Department of Health
Residential Water & Sewage Program
246 N. High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: (614) 644-7551
Fax: (614) 466-4556
BEH@odh.ohio.gov**