

# Ohio's Draft Sewage Treatment System Rules

## Frequently Asked Questions



### Why is Ohio updating the household sewage treatment rules?

- State minimum rules for sewage treatment system construction and operation were adopted in 1977. Local health districts were able to adopt more stringent rules. ODH is required to adopt new rules after January 1, 2012.

### Will Everyone in Ohio have to replace their septic tank?

- For nearly all systems the rules do not require an automatic system upgraded. All existing systems are deemed approved under state law until they fail and cannot be repaired.
- The rules establish new modern standards for system construction, alteration and maintenance when a system fails or breaks and must be altered or replaced, or a when a new system is installed.
- System owners can request a timeline for the incremental repair and/or replacement of a failing system. This spreads system replacement costs out over time and also allows the owner to try common sense solutions like installing water saving fixtures, reducing water usage or fixing leaks to reduce flow to the system.
- A wide range of modern design choices and technologies for new or replacement sewage systems are available that provide safe and sustainable treatment in the diverse soils and geology of the state. This promotes healthy communities and safe development in suburban and rural areas not served by public sewers.

### Will the new equipment be expensive?

- The draft rules carefully balance the protection of public health and safety from sewage related diseases with system cost and reduce the discharge of nutrients to the environment protecting lakes and streams, and reducing growth of algae.
- Good design options for systems help protect the financial investment of the homeowner in their system. Proper system maintenance ensures systems are sustainable for many years.
- Lower cost, low maintenance systems such as septic tanks to leaching trenches that use the natural soils for treatment are the preferred design and will continue to be the primary system installed in Ohio. New technologies are available for use where the soils present greater challenges for sewage treatment.
- The draft rules combine state standards with options for local flexibility. For example, local health districts can establish a local vertical separation distance between 6 and 18 inches to the seasonal water table, representing the most common limiting condition for soils in the state. This approach will help lower system costs where local conditions can allow more basic system designs.
- Local health districts work directly with homeowners on system permitting, installation, education and monitoring of system maintenance.

### How did the rule update process engage the public?

- ODH convened a rule advisory committee in October, 2010 representing 43 organizations including local health districts, product manufacturers, system installers, service providers, septic haulers, local and state government, homebuilders, realtors, townships, county commissioners, and engineers. The committee met monthly from December 2010 through October 2012 with discussions on related rule topics at each meeting.
- Rule advisory committee meetings were open, served over the internet, and most were audio recorded. Resource materials, notes of committee decisions, and comments were captured and posted on a department website.
- Rule drafts were prepared based on committee discussions and posted on the ODH website in February, 2012; August, 2012, October, 2012 and early December, 2012 allowing an extended review period for most proposed rules.
- The first compiled draft of rules was posted for comment from December 20, 2012 through March 1, 2013. ODH conducted 11 regional meetings in January/Feb. 2013 to discuss the draft rules and obtain comment. 2000 comments received.
- Effective date for the rules are **January 1, 2015**.