

# How to Apply for a Permit to Construct a Septic Tank

## What permits do I need in order to install a septic tank?



You need an on-site sewage disposal system permit. You must also have a valid building permit for any structure the system will serve.

## What's the first step in the process?



We strongly recommend that you make an appointment to have a staff member from Environmental Health (650/363-4305) come out and examine your property with you. The staff member can give you guidance about slopes, setback requirements, and other factors that will determine where you may locate the tank, drainfield and expansion area.

## Will this examination determine whether I can install a septic tank on my property?

To make this determination, you need to have a percolation test conducted to measure the rate at which the ground will absorb the effluent. This involves digging a hole, pre-soaking the soil, running water into the hole, and then monitoring the rate at which the water sinks in. An acceptable rate is no less than 3/4 inch per hour.

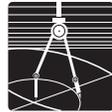
## Who conducts the percolation test?

A person certified by the Environmental Health Division must conduct the test for your single-family home. If you are subdividing a parcel, you must employ a licensed soil engineer, registered environmental health specialist or registered geologist. A representative from Environmental Health will monitor the test. You should call Environmental Health 24 hours in advance to arrange for a representative to come out to your property.

## If the test is successful, what's the next step?

You can apply for your permit at Environmental Health in the County Government Center, 455 County Center, Redwood City, fourth floor.

## What should I submit with my application?



You should submit a plot plan showing the location of the following:

- ✓ The well
- ✓ Any driveways and structures.
- ✓ Percolation test holes, proposed drainfield and expansion area

The plot must show the topography in 5-foot contours at a scale of 1" = 40' or larger.

You must also submit a geotechnical report addressing the soil stability at the drainfield site and expansion area on slopes of 20% or greater.

## How long will it take to process my application?



Two weeks from the time you submit your completed application and all required tests, plans and fees.

## What are the setback requirements?

Septic tanks must be:

- ✓ 5 feet from any building.
- ✓ 10 feet from any property line with an approved public water supply.
- ✓ 50 feet from any property line for parcels without an available public water supply.
- ✓ 100 feet from any well or the top of any stream bank.
- ✓ 25 feet from any swimming pool.

Drainfields and seepage pits must be:

- ✓ 10 feet from any building or property line with an approved public water supply.
- ✓ 50 feet from any property line for parcels without an available public water supply.
- ✓ 100 feet from any well or the top of any stream bank.
- ✓ 50 feet from any ditch, cut bank or slope 50% or greater.
- ✓ 25 feet from any swimming pool.
- ✓ 200 feet from any domestic water supply reservoir.
- ✓ 100 feet from a non-domestic water supply reservoir.

The septic tank, drainfield, and other components of the septic system shall be located within the boundaries of the parcel upon which the structure requiring the system is built.

No drainfield or other leaching system shall be located in slopes of fifty percent (50%) or greater.

## What factors determine the size of the tank and drainfields?

The number of bedrooms in your home and the percolation rate measured in your percolation test make the determination. The minimum size tank is 1,500 gallons, and the length of the drainfields will be based on the percolation rate and number of bedrooms.

## What kinds of inspections can I expect?



Environmental Health will perform at least one progress inspection and a final inspection.

## Who will decide whether my application is approved?



The Environmental Health staff will make the approval decision. The County Geologist will approve the geotechnical report.

## Can I appeal their decision?

You can appeal their decision to the Director of Environmental Health, and you can appeal the Director's decision to the Board of Supervisors.

## What fees must I pay?



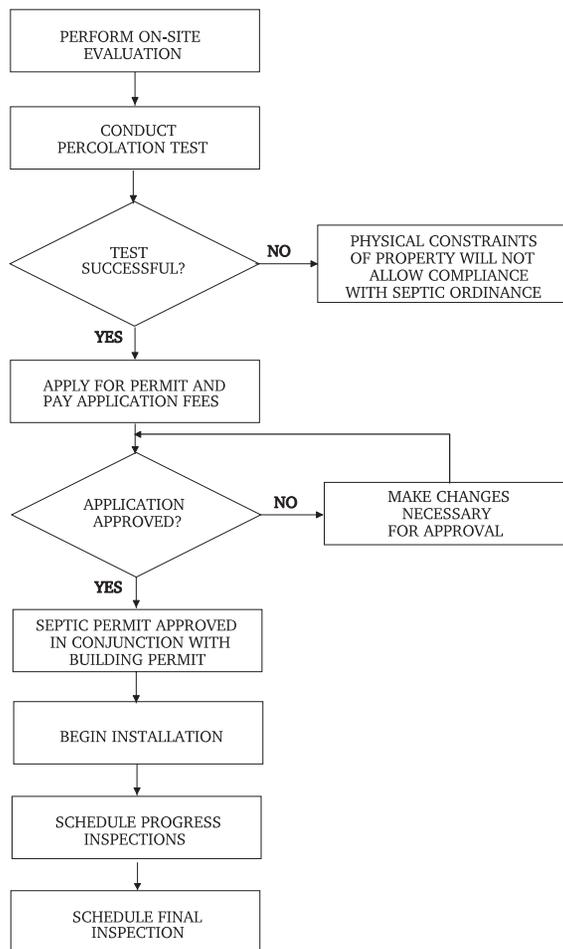
You must pay an application fee to Environmental Health. You may have to pay coastal development fees to the Planning Division if your property is in the coastal zone.

## What's the next step in this process?



We recommend that you call Environmental Health (650/363-4305) and make an appointment for an informal meeting before you start the application process. Office hours for Environmental Health are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

# Permit Process to Construct a Septic Tank



San Mateo County  
Planning and Building Division

# How to Apply for a Permit to Construct a Septic Tank

Planning and Building Division

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