

COMMON SEPTIC QUESTIONS

I'm building a new house that needs a private septic and well. What do I need to do first?

- Contact the local Township and County Zoning to inquire if your building site can be developed. You then need to contact a Certified Soil Tester who will locate a suitable septic area as this area is dictated by the soils, type and design of the system allowed. Once a septic area and type has been designated and designed you need to select an installing plumber who will apply for a Sanitary Permit with the La Crosse County Environmental Health Division.
- Before you start your building project you will need the additional following permits:
 - A Sanitary Permit and a Well Location Permit submitted to the County Environmental Health Division by the installing well driller.
 - Contact the Land Conservation Department for slope restrictions and an Erosion Control Permit.
 - Contact the Zoning Department to determine current zoning, floodplain and setback requirements and a Zoning Permit.
 - Contact your local Township to inquire if they have additional permits and regulations

I received a Pumping Report Form from the La Crosse County Health Department stating it is time to pump my septic tank. I live alone and hardly use my system. Why do I have to pump my tank?

- The La Crosse County Sanitary and Private Sewage System Ordinance requires an owner of a private septic system on a three year basis provide this department with documentation that the septic tank has been pumped when the tank is greater than one-third full of solids or inspected if not one-third full. A visual inspection of the septic field is also required. Therefore if you live alone, your structure is used only for weekends or a seasonal cabin your tank may not need pumping (less than one-third full of solids) but a tank and field inspection are still required every three years. **La Crosse County also requires a \$15 management fee to be submitted with the form. Forms received more than 60 days after the date of the first notice will be charged a \$29 late fee**

If I remove my old home/mobile home and replace it with a new home/mobile home, can I hook the new structure up to my existing system?

- You will be required to get a County Reconnection Permit and have a reconnection inspection completed by a master plumber and certified soil tester of your existing septic system. The extent of the inspection required will depend on the age of the existing system. If the system is failing a new system will be required.

I am selling my home with a private septic system and want to know if I have to replace my existing system.

- If the existing septic system is not failing it is not necessary to replace your system. Many financial institutions require a septic inspection for home loans. An inspection may show signs indicating system failure in the near future which may cause the lending institution or prospective buyer to request a replacement system or cost arrangement for future replacement.

Do septic tank additives help digest your system?

- Generally the septic tank additives that are on the market do not harm your system but do not add any benefit to the digestion of your septic tank. If you actively use your system with proper maintenance there should be no need to use any additives.

Can I do any plantings on top of my new drainfield?

- There is no code restriction on landscaping above a septic drainfield. However driving heavy equipment is not allowed over a septic system and we don't recommend you plant trees larger than small shrubs with shallow root structure. Grasses, wild flower mix and other prairie grass mixes make a good cover and prevent soil erosion.

I don't like the looks of my well casing and septic pipes. How can I landscape them so they aren't visible?

- All well casing must be 12" high. All septic vents must be 12" high and all septic tank manhole covers above grade must be a minimum of 4" above ground. If after landscaping they do not meet the above regulations you must contact your well driller and septic plumber and see that additional lengths be added. Observation pipes on your septic system may be cut to grade and capped. Ask your installing plumber which ones are allowed before you cut them.

I want to build an addition onto my existing home. Do I have to make any changes to my existing septic system?

- It will depend on the description and square footage of the addition. If your addition is for an additional bedroom(s) this allows additional people to reside within the structure. Septic systems are sized by the number of bedrooms (water usage per day by the number of occupants) within a structure. This increase in number will require a larger septic system. Depending on the age of the system, you have the option of increasing the size of your existing system or replacing it with a new larger system. If the addition does not change the number of occupants at present or for future resale, a family room for example, and the existing system is in good working order, no changes will be necessary.

I have just bought a house with a private septic and well. Where can I get information about my septic system and well? Where can I have the well water tested?

- The La Crosse County Environmental Health Department has on file septic system permits dating back to 1970 and well permits dating back to 1988. Well permit history prior to 1988 has been recorded on disc by the Wisconsin Department of Resources and available through their office and La Crosse County Environmental Health.