

Procedure for Applying to Construct a New Residential Wastewater System

Step 1- Making contacts and gathering information

If you have not yet purchased the property, contact Johnson County Public Health (319-356-6040) to get information about options and regulations for constructing a wastewater system on the property. By receiving information about the soils and possible limitations of the property for construction of a wastewater system prior to purchase, better plans and decisions about the development of the property can be made. There is no charge for this service.

If you have purchased the property and are getting ready to build, contact the Johnson County Planning & Zoning Department (319-356-6083) to get information about obtaining a building permit to construct your new home. In addition, contact Johnson County Public Health (319-356-6040) to get information about options and regulations for construction of a wastewater system on your property.

Building permits are not issued until the Planning and Zoning Department receives notification that a permit to construct the wastewater system has been issued, so it is important that you start the process for obtaining a wastewater system permit as soon as possible.

When calling the public health department for wastewater system information the environmental health specialist will likely ask these questions:

- ✓ What is the location of the property?
- ✓ What is the approximate size or acreage of the property?
- ✓ Is the property zoned as residential?

Step 2- Contacting a Registered Engineer or Professional Soil Specialist

To begin the wastewater system permitting process, **contact a registered engineer or professional soil specialist to perform a site characterization and a soil evaluation.** Call Johnson County Public Health (319-356-6040) to find out how to contact a professional who can perform these functions. The contract between you and the engineer or soil specialist is private, so you should be aware that fees and evaluation procedures differ from company to company.

Step 3- Site characterization

The **site characterization** is used to locate the best place for the onsite wastewater system. Work with the engineer or soil specialist to make sure the site characterization accurately assesses:

- ✓ The location of the house, future or existing outbuildings, driveways, and other construction that will impact the size and location of the wastewater system. Other construction includes swimming pools, decks, patios, and major landscaping such as terracing or gardens.
- ✓ The locations of all easements and lot lines so that setbacks and separation distances can be achieved
- ✓ The locations of known drainage tiles
- ✓ The locations of areas that are subject to flooding
- ✓ The elevation of the lowest point of the house (usually the basement elevation)

Step 4- Soil evaluation

Once the site characterization is complete, the **soil evaluation** can be done. The evaluator will use a large diameter probe to draw samples of the soil from the various locations on the property that have been identified as potential locations for the onsite wastewater system. The soil evaluator will make descriptions of the color, texture, and structure of the soil. Limiting layers, such as high groundwater indicators, bedrock, or tight clay soil, will also be noted. The

information obtained through this process will be used to find the best type of system for treating the wastewater on your property. It will also be used to determine the size of the system to be installed.

Step 5- Submitting your permit application

The following must be submitted to Johnson County Public Health to obtain a construction permit for a new onsite wastewater system:

- Completed application to construct a new wastewater system, **signed by the applicant or applicant's agent.**
- The permit fee (the amount of the permit fee can be found on the permit application)
- Drawing of the property that includes the location of the house and any other proposed or existing buildings, lot lines, easements, water well(s), all soil probes, and delineation of all areas that are not suitable locations for the wastewater system.
- Soil description for every soil probe performed on the property
- Complete wastewater system design and specifications

All of these materials need to be submitted to the health department at the same time. It is important to note that most of the permit application is commonly completed by the soil evaluator or registered engineer. If you have questions about what you need to include in your permit application please contact Johnson County Public Health (319-356-6040).

Step 6- Site inspection/ issuing the permit

When our office receives an application we review all of the information and verify its accuracy by performing a site inspection of the property. All stakes and flags marking the location of the house, the basement elevation, and the locations of the soil probes must be in place so that an accurate assessment can be made. If the information is determined to be complete and accurate, a permit to construct the wastewater system will be issued. The permit to construct the wastewater system is valid for one year from the date of issue.

Step 7- Protecting the Septic Site

Johnson County Public Health recommends the applicant assure that the area designated for the wastewater system is physically protected with fencing or by roping it off so that it cannot be disturbed in any way. Disturbance to the area voids the construction permit and may result in a costly reevaluation of the property and even a change in the wastewater system technology that is used.

It is also important to protect the system after it is installed. Exposing septic site to heavy loads (such as driving a truck over the septic site during a landscaping project) can cause significant disturbance and/or compaction of the system potentially leading to malfunction.

Step 8- Finding a contractor/ final inspection

Once the permit to construct the wastewater system has been issued, the specifications can be sent to wastewater systems contractors to get bids for the work. **Do not send copies of the specifications out for bids until the permit has been issued; make sure that the set of specifications sent out for bids is the approved set.** Many wastewater system contractors are listed in the phone book's yellow pages. Your building contractor may also be able to provide some names to you.

Our staff must inspect the wastewater system before it can be covered up. We must be notified by you or the wastewater system contractor when it is ready for inspection. We will send you a copy of our final inspection diagram and information about the proper maintenance of your system.

- Johnson County Public Health must be notified for a final inspection at least 24 hours before completion of the wastewater system.

Johnson County Public Health
855 S Dubuque Street Iowa City, IA 52240
(319)-356-6040 Hours: M-F 8am-4pm
www.johnson-county.com/publichealth/