



PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

Chelan-Douglas Health District

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Environmental Health: 509/886-6450 • FAX 886-6449

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Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of Onsite Sewage Systems

A septic system, just like a car or vacuum cleaner must be properly operated and maintained to ensure long-term, cost effective service. Unfortunately, most septic systems are simply installed and forgotten. After all, they're buried in the yard, "out of sight -- out of mind." Licensed professionals design and install septic systems, but uninformed homeowners are responsible for their ongoing care and maintenance.

Operations & Maintenance Service Providers

The Washington State Administrative Code (WAC) 246-272A, which governs onsite septic systems, makes it clear that the owner of a septic system is "responsible for operating, monitoring, and maintaining the OSS to minimize the risk of failure..." Part of this Code requires the owner to periodically "assure a complete evaluation of the system components and/or property to determine functionality, maintenance needs and compliance with regulations and any permits..."

Comprehensive operation and maintenance services as defined by the WAC including exposing tank components, measuring scum & sludge layers, sampling wastewater, conducting tank draw down measurements, and cleaning components is well beyond the capacity of most homeowners. Hence, to help ensure that all septic systems located within Chelan and Douglas counties receive quality routine monitoring and maintenance, the District mandates that only licensed professionals (licensed by the Health District) may conduct these O&M services. These licensed individuals are professionals who have demonstrated the requisite skills, training, and knowledge to provide this important community service.

Real Estate inspections (time-of-sale inspections)

Washington State RCW 64.06.20 requires the seller of an improved residential property to fully disclose to the buyer certain items related to onsite septic systems. Often a real estate professional will call upon an O&M Service Provider, who is considered to be a qualified third party, to submit a report regarding a septic system's status to satisfy this RCW requirement. State licensed septic system designers and professional engineers are also authorized to conduct these inspections. Time-of-sale inspections must be recorded on the Health District's "time-of-sale" inspection report form found on our website. Failing septic systems must be reported to the Health District.

A current list of O&M Service Providers and list of state licensed septic system designers and professional engineers can be found on our website or please call (509) 886-6450.