



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.

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What is O&M?

Operation and maintenance is about on-site sewage systems (OSS) functioning properly and being cared for correctly. In order for an OSS to continue to function properly, care must be taken by those responsible for it. Proper monitoring, correct operation and maintenance are the responsibility of the OSS owner. [The Washington Administration Code, Chapter 246- 272A-0270](#) details homeowner maintenance responsibilities. <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=246-272A-0270>

Who can Perform an Evaluation of My OSS?

- OSS evaluations must now be done by a licensed O&M Specialist.
- A report is completed at the time of the evaluation by the O&M Specialist--- reports may be submitted by service provider through the eonsite.net system
- See list of local persons

When do I need an OSS Evaluation?

- Once every three years for conventional gravity systems (systems consisting of only septic tank and drain field)
- Annually for all other systems unless specified otherwise by the manufacturer.

Who are the O&M Specialists?

Professionals licensed by Chelan-Douglas Health District and who have:

- At least two years continuous experience in the OSS industry
- Completed proper training courses
- Maintained continuing education in the field of O&M

A current list of O&M Service Providers is available from Chelan Douglas Health District. For more information, please call (509) 886-6400.