



ACT 537 - SEWAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

What Does It Take? - Part I

A well-designed and operated sewage management program assures that the operation and maintenance needs of sewage facilities within a municipality's jurisdiction are adequately and consistently being met.

Most of Pennsylvania's existing sewage management programs require at least the minimum standards for onlot system maintenance that are listed in Title 25 of the Pennsylvania Code, Chapter 71 §71.73 (This DEP regulation, as well as others, may be found on-line at www.pacode.com). These minimum standards include the following:

- Removal of septage from the treatment tanks once every three years or following a tank inspection that reveals the need for septage removal (when the tank is determined to be more than 1/3 full).
- Maintenance of surface contouring around the system to divert storm water and to protect the system from damage.
- Water conservation requirements.
- Requirements for operation and maintenance of electrical, mechanical and chemical components of sewage facilities; collection and conveyance piping, pressure lines and manholes; alarm and flow recorder devices; pumps; disinfection equipment and related safety items.
- Provisions for septage pumping and disposal.
- Requirements for holding tank maintenance.

However, many sewage management programs also go beyond these minimum standards by addressing additional requirements for operation and maintenance and/or by including provisions that help to carry out the minimum requirements. For example, a sewage management program may call for any of the following:

- Educating residents, particularly property owners served by onlot systems, about the workings and needs of onlot systems and sewage management program requirements.
- Operation and maintenance standards for other sewage treatment systems, such as pre-regulatory systems, manufactured onlot treatment systems or small flow treatment facilities.
- Registration or licensing of septage pumpers and/or other service providers.
- Observations by septage pumpers or other agents, or inspections by the Sewage Enforcement Officer (SEO) regarding system integrity and performance.
- Reporting of activities and/or findings by septage pumpers or other service providers.
- Standard procedures for such activities as treatment tank pumping and system observation or inspection.
- Requirements for proper disposal of septage.
- User fees or permits and associated fees for activities, such as treatment tank pumping, to help defray the administrative costs of the sewage management program.

Is it difficult to administer a sewage management program?

Not as difficult as you may think. Although it does take some time and effort to administer a sewage management program, most programs make relatively small demands on staff time and resources.

Depending on the nature and detail of the program, a municipality may have to make educational contacts, mass mail notices and other information, review and assess reports, coordinate with the SEO or other administrative or enforcement staff, and/or conduct pre-enforcement or other follow-up activities. Some

municipalities with sewage management programs have also had to take enforcement action against violators, but these instances are relatively rare. Most cases are resolved at the pre-enforcement level.

Although individual situations and results may vary, most active sewage management programs operate using, on average, one primary staff person and one or two support persons. These individuals are usually existing personnel who operate the sewage management program on a part-time basis along with their other duties.

Total staff time spent operating a sewage management program can range from less than 100 hours to possibly over 600 hours per year. The observed median program time is approximately 200 staff hours per year. Time devoted to the program is often unevenly distributed throughout the year with peak time demands during mass mailings. At other periods the staff time needed for the sewage management program may be relatively low.

Since sewage management programs are largely administrative in nature, equipment to operate the program is primarily office-based. In addition to standard office equipment and supplies, bulk mailing materials and a records filing system, a sewage management program generally requires a system for tracking and billing. Tracking and billing may be accomplished with a computer program that is fully customized or one that is built using commercially available database or spreadsheet software.

Additional details as to the administrative aspects and costs of a sewage management program can be found in Part II of this fact sheet.

For more information, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Sewage, or contact the DEP regional office in your area.

Southeast Region

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Norristown, PA 19401
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24-Hour Emergency: 484-250-5900

Counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia

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400 Waterfront Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745
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208 W. Third St., Suite 101
Williamsport, PA 17701
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Counties: Bradford, Cameron, Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union