



### **What is this guide for?**

Use this guide to learn about the steps to getting your on-site sewage system (OSS) application & design approved! We are here to help you through the application & design process for your OSS, commonly referred to as a septic system. If you ever have a question, please call **(425) 339-5250** or email [SHD-EHQ@snoco.org](mailto:SHD-EHQ@snoco.org)

### **You should use this guide if you are:**

- Building a new home or other structure that will not be connected to sewer for wastewater treatment
- Having a major repair done to your existing septic system that requires a permit. See the repairs section on our maintenance webpage for [which repairs require a permit](#).
- Replacing your existing septic system
- Doing a home addition/remodel that requires you to increase the size of your septic system or alter it

### **Why does the Health Department need to approve the application & design?**

Snohomish County Health Department (SCHD) reviews all septic system applications and designs to make sure they meet current [Washington State regulations](#) and [Snohomish County Board of Health Code](#) for on-site wastewater treatment. Untreated wastewater from households is a risk not only to people living on the property, but it can also contaminate the environment and pose a risk to the wider community. We are here to make sure your septic system is designed properly to protect public health and water quality in our region.

### **Application & design steps**

Below is a list of steps for submitting your OSS (septic system) application and design. Depending on your property and what you want to do, there may be more requirements with other regulatory agencies such as the Department of [Planning & Development Services \(PDS\)](#) in addition to what the Health Department requires.

#### **Step 1: Hire a designer or professional engineer**

The only people allowed to design septic systems are licensed on-site wastewater designers and professional engineers. You can find licensed designers and engineers by using the [Washington State Department of Licensing Lookup](#) online. To narrow your results to those with an active license in our area, you can click *Advanced Search with License Details*. You could also do an internet search for septic system designers and use the DOL lookup to verify that they have an active license. We recommend getting multiple quotes to find a fair price.

Financial assistance: SCHD offers grants to qualifying homeowners with failing septic systems through the Savvy Septic program. Grants can be used for design and installation costs but cannot be used as reimbursement for work you've already paid for. Visit <https://www.snohd.org/718/Grants> for more info. If you don't qualify for a Savvy Septic grant, you may be eligible for a Clean Water Loan through the non-profit lender Craft3. Visit [www.Craft3.org](http://www.Craft3.org) for more info.

- I have hired a licensed designer or professional engineer to design my system



### Step 2: Your system design

The professional you hire will work with you to design a septic system that meets state and local code. They will consider many factors such as the number of bedrooms your house/structure has or will have, the type of soil on your property, and how close you are to a water source. They will need to dig soil test holes in your yard to analyze the soil on your property. Below are a few things to keep in mind for this part:

Hazards: It is your responsibility as the homeowner to secure your property for any hazards created by the soil test holes. If you cover the openings with something (like plywood) our staff will move it when they go out to your property in Step 4 to conduct their review and then put it back in place.

Filling in holes: You must wait until an official decision is made by the Health Department regarding your application and septic design before filling in the holes. However, note that the designer or Health Department may later request holes be re-dug for a reevaluation.

- The designer has dug soil test holes and analyzed my property conditions
- I have secured my property for the hazards created by soil test holes

### Step 3: Submitting the application & paying the fee

Your system designer will complete the Application for an On-Site Sewage System Permit and submit this form along with their proposed design to the Health Department. When the Health Department receives the application, it will be reviewed for completeness.

If it is complete, an invoice to pay the application fee will be emailed to you and your designer. Some designers include this fee in their cost and others do not. You'll need to talk with your designer to see if they cover this fee as part of their service. Fees can be found on our [online fee schedule](#) – select *Septic, Water, Land Use* and see the fees under *On-Site Sewage Dispersal System*. If the application is incomplete, you and your designer will be notified. Once corrections are made the application can be resubmitted.

Money-saving tip: If you also need to submit an Application for an Individual Water Supply to the Health Department, submit it at the same time and the fee will be less than if it's submitted on its own!

Help keep our staff safe: Please remind your designer to use the comments section of the application to warn the Health Department of any potential hazards on your property (for example pets/animals or electric fences). Additionally, if your property is locked and will need a key or code, have them make a note so our staff can contact you to coordinate entry onto your property.

- If applicable, I've reminded the designer to include comments about hazards or access requirements
- The designer has submitted the application
- The application fee has been paid



#### **Step 4: Health Department review**

Once the fee has been paid, your application be reviewed by the Health Department. A Health Department representative will visit your property to check the soil and other site conditions, making sure the proposed design will treat wastewater effectively. Once the review is done, the Health Department will send a response to you and the designer. If everything looks good, your design and application will be approved! If it's not approved, the Health Department will send a letter of explanation to you and your designer letting you know what needs to be fixed. Once corrections are made, the designer can submit a redesign.

- I've received an official response from the Health Department about my application & design

#### **Step 5: Your application and design was approved! What's next?**

If your application and design got a stamp of approval from the Health Department, great! With your approval notice, you will receive the resources you need to take the next step which is getting a permit issued and installing the system. While waiting for installation, please keep these important points in mind:

This is not a permit: Getting your app and design approved is NOT a permit for installation of the system.

Leave the soil alone: Do not disturb the soil on your property in the designated drainfield and reserve areas.

Notify of any changes: Your approval is based on the location of existing or proposed structures at the time of review. If you are contemplating any changes to existing or proposed structures, be sure to contact your designer! All revisions are subject to review and approval by the Health Department. You may need to pay an additional fee for review of the revision, when applicable.

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### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **How do I check my application status?**

Visit our [septic application turnaround times](#) webpage to check your application status and see our current turnaround times.

#### **How do I know when the Health Department will visit my property after my application is submitted?**

Environmental Health Specialists from the Health Department can enter a property for the purposes of reviewing an application and design at any time per Snohomish County Board of Health Code (SCBHC) 1.05.080. They will knock to see if someone is home, notify you of their presence and reason for visiting, and request access to your property. However, if no one is home they will still proceed with their review. They will need to inspect the soil test holes and may need to walk around other areas of your property to check other site conditions (for example, the location of a well).



### **What other steps might I need to take during the application and design process?**

During the design phase, you may need to complete other requirements. For instance, if you are also seeking a building permit, the Department of [Planning & Development Services \(PDS\)](#) will let you know of things like land surveys, critical area reviews, wetland delineations, etc. that may need to be completed. There may also be things like property easements you need to sort out during the design process.

### **How do I appeal a decision made by the Health Department?**

To appeal application decisions, please refer to [chapter 1.20 Snohomish County Board of Health Code \(SCBHC\)](#). An administrative appeal must be filed in writing with the Environmental Health Division Office within twenty-one (21) calendar days from the date of your application decision.

Download, complete, and save the [“Request for Appeal”](#) form to your computer/device. Send an email, attaching your completed Appeal Request and supporting documents, to [SHD-EHQ@snoco.org](mailto:SHD-EHQ@snoco.org).

### **How long is the approved application and design good for?**

Approved OSS applications are valid for 2 years from the date approved. Once the 2 years is up, you may renew for an additional 2-year period by following these steps:

1. Within 30 days of expiration, you will need to have a designer or professional engineer submit a Renewal Application. You do not need to use the same designer you used for your original application.
2. Pay the renewal fee.
3. The Health Department will review and approve for renewal if everything looks good.
4. You can continue renewing for 2-year periods, following steps 1-3 as needed.

What happens if you miss the cutoff? A whole new application and new application fee must be submitted.

Money-Saving Tip: The renewal fee is a lot less than a new app fee, so don't miss the cutoff!