

Septic Systems Guide for Home Owners & Home Buyers



What you need to know before:

- **Selling your home**
- **Buying a home**

Guide for Homeowners with Septic Systems

Planning to sell your home?

If you are planning to sell your home and your home has a home sewage treatment system (HSTS) or “septic system”, regulations mandate the system be inspected by a qualified sanitarian representing the Trumbull County Health District prior to the sale.

HB231 requires proper disclosure of the HSTS upon transfer of the deed of operation and maintenance of the septic system servicing the property.

Why is this necessary?

Trumbull County has 26,000 HSTS's and many are discharging an average of 300 gallons of waste water per day polluting surface and ground waters. This amounts to nearly 100,000 gallons per household per year. Given the tremendous amount of this potentially dangerous material being discharged to our ditches, streams and underground drains, the Health Department has the responsibility and the authority to control it for the public good.

What is the role of the Health Department?

The goal of the Trumbull County Health Department is to protect the environment and ensure the safe working order of septic systems in the County. The only way to ensure that a system is working properly is to have it tested by the Health Department. Malfunctioning septic systems discharge germs like E. Coli, viruses and other potentially dangerous/harmful contaminants into the environment. This is a health risk and is in fact prohibited by law.

Where do I Start?

Begin by contacting the Trumbull County Health Department at **(330) 675-2489**. Select number 2 on the automated menu and you will speak to a representative of the Environmental Division. You can also visit the Environmental Division's section on the Health Department's website at **www.tcbh.org**, or visit the office of the Health Department located at 176 Chestnut Ave., NE, Warren, Ohio 44483

Will my Septic System Pass Inspection?

There is no way to know for sure until it is tested. That is the simple truth. You may however decide to allow the new owner to complete the process rather than completing it before the sale. This involves placing some of the proceeds from the sale in an escrow account and proceeding with the sale. Whether the upgrade, if needed, happens immediately or after the sale, the new owner must be fully aware of the installation components and the procedures necessary to maintain the system.

How much does it cost to upgrade a HSTS?

There are many variables that need to be considered when asking this question. In fact, there is no way to know. The condition of the present system, the functional criteria that have to be met at the time the permit is issued, the appearance design desired, the location of the system, the amount of available land, and the soil conditions, as well as other variables all enter into the cost. So, too, does the availability of installers, season of the year, and the deal you are able to negotiate. It pays to shop around.

Upgrade or Escrow?

That is a decision you have to make based on your situation. The condition of the septic system dictates what needs to be done. Obviously, the conditions of the sale agreement, the lending institution and the needs of the buyer have to be considered, but generally speaking, if the seller is bearing the brunt of the cost he/she has the most to gain/lose. Does the seller have the time to devote to the process? Ultimately, the seller pays to satisfy the buyers' demands.

What is the expected functional life of a new septic system?

The best analogy compares the HSTS to the roof on the house. We all know a roof, because of wear, has to be replaced every 20 years or so. Similarly, a house needs to have a properly functioning septic system to ensure the safety of its residents. Unfortunately, unlike sewers, a home septic system is not a permanent solution for the home owner.

Am I required to have a permit to operate my individual septic system?

The answer is yes. The permit to operate is issued by the Local Board of Health.

Contact: Trumbull County Health
Department Environmental Division,
176 Chestnut Ave. NE
Warren, Ohio 44483
(330) 675-2489
or visit
www.tcbh.org