

Frequently Asked Questions: Septic Systems



Requirements pertaining to septic systems in Sherburne County are outlined in the Sherburne County Zoning Ordinance (Section 17.5) and Minnesota Chapters 7080-7083, which are available on our website.



Please consult the Zoning Ordinance and MN Rules Chapters 7080-7083 for further information on requirements and regulations or contact the Planning and Zoning Department with any questions or comments. We look forward to working with you.

1. **How do I get a permit to install a septic system?**

Contact a state-licensed septic system designer to determine the appropriate system type, size, and location for your property. A designer will provide you with a design that works best for your property. You will need to hire an installer and then submit the design for approval by the Zoning Office along with the appropriate fee. A fee schedule is available in the Zoning Office and on the County's website at www.co.sherburne.mn.us/zoning. In addition, a list of licensed septic professionals is available online at www.pca.state.mn.us/water/ssts-search.

2. **What do I need to do after I obtain a permit?**

Unless the homeowner is installing the system, the responsibility generally shifts to the septic system installer. It is required that the installer contact the Zoning Office for inspections at least 24 hours ahead of time. Some systems may have multiple inspections. Once the final inspection is approved, a certificate of installation will be issued.

3. **Do I need a permit to replace my pump?**

A permit is not needed in Sherburne County for septic system maintenance such as pump replacement, manhole lid replacement, pipe repair, and filter cleaning/replacement. If you are unsure, please call the Zoning Office and we will gladly answer your questions.

4. **What is a compliance inspection?**

A compliance inspection is used to determine if a septic system meets local and state requirements. The inspection must be conducted by a state-licensed inspector. The inspector looks at the septic tank(s) to determine if they are watertight. The inspector reviews the drainfield to ensure it has the minimum required vertical separation between the bottom of the drainfield and the periodically saturated soil or bedrock. Additionally, the inspector checks to see if the system is functioning properly overall. If the inspection passes, a certificate of compliance is issued.

over...

This document is intended to assist our customers in answering frequent questions about Septic System requirements in Sherburne County. Please note that this guide is only a summary and not intended as a legal authority on specific land use requirements.

Questions?

Contact us at (763) 765-4450 or zoning@co.sherburne.mn.us

Frequently Asked Questions: Septic Systems

5. When do I need a compliance inspection?

Most property transfers that include a home in Sherburne County requires the septic system to be newer than five (5) years or a passing septic compliance inspection completed on the system within the past three (3) years. In addition, any building permit request, other than maintenance permits (i.e re-roof, re-side, furnace), requires that the septic system on the property is newer than ten (10) years or a passing compliance inspection completed on the system in the past ten (10) years.

6. How can my system be failing?

Often times we hear of systems “working” or that homeowners have never had a problem with the system despite the fact that an MPCA licensed inspector just failed it. A septic system is not only considered failing if it is discharging sewage to the ground surface or backing up into a dwelling, but it can also be failing if the bottom of the drainfield has less than the required vertical separation distance to the water table or any other restricting layer. MN Rules 7080.1500, Subp. 4, further explains compliance criteria.

7. How can I take better care of my septic system?

Homeowners can start by working with a septic system professional to develop a management plan for their specific system. A management plan can help the homeowner understand the importance of a regular pumping schedule and how to establish the pumping schedule that is right for their specific system. A management plan can also help the homeowner understand the importance of monitoring water use, repairing leaky fixtures, limiting the use of antibacterial products and household cleaners, and knowing what types of products and medications are potentially detrimental to a septic system. For more detailed information regarding the use of your septic system and management plans, please visit the University of Minnesota website (www.septic.umn.edu). There is an Owner’s Guide available to purchase as well as many free resources. In the end, it is important to remember that properly maintaining your septic system will help optimize the lifespan and performance of the system which is both environmentally and financially beneficial.

8. Is septic maintenance required?

Maintenance of your septic system will depend on the type of system serving your residence. At a minimum, you should have your tanks assessed or pumped every three years.

9. What can I do to prevent my septic system from freezing?

Although there is no one solution that will work for every situation, there are many things that can be done to help prevent septic systems from freezing. Here are a few ideas to start with. There are many more available on the University of Minnesota website (www.septic.umn.edu).

- Do not mow the grass over the top of the drainfield in the fall.
- Also in the fall, spread 8-12 inches of loose leaves, hay, or straw on top of the drainfield, tank(s), and the pipes going to and from the tank(s).
- If you are going to be out of town for more than 2 days, have a friend or neighbor stop over periodically and use an appliance such as a dishwasher to inject warmth into the system.
- Snow is a good insulator. Keep animals, children, and equipment off of the system to protect the snow cover.



Questions?

Contact us at [\(763\) 765-4450](tel:7637654450) or zoning@co.sherburne.mn.us