

Sand Filter and Pressure Distribution Maintenance

Septic system owners are responsible for the maintenance of their septic system.

Required Inspections

Owners of sand filter systems and/or pressure distribution systems **permitted before 2014** must inspect their septic tank and dosing tank at least once a year for sludge and scum accumulation. Septic tanks must be pumped:

- when surface floating scum accumulations within the tank is less than three inches from the bottom of the outlet tee, holes, or ports
- when sludge from the bottom of the tank is less than six inches below the bottom of the outlet tee, holes or ports.

Owners of sand filter systems and/or pressure distribution systems **permitted on or after Jan. 2, 2014** must maintain a service contract with a certified maintenance provider. A copy of the service contract must be submitted to DEQ before the system is installed. These owners must also submit an annual report, pursuant to Oregon Administrative Rule 340-071-0130(17), and annual evaluation fee, pursuant to Oregon Administrative Rule 340-071-0140(3).

Maintenance

- DEQ recommends **pumping septic tanks when the solids accumulation is 35 percent** of the tank volume and pumping the dosing tank, or pump chamber of a two-compartment tank, at the same time.
- **Test the pump and alarm operation** at least once each year by manually lifting each float switch inside the dosing tank of pump chamber.
- **Test pump-cycle volume** by measuring the sewage level in the tank at the start

of pumping and again at the pump turn-off.

- The proper pump cycle volume for a residential sand filter is no more than 10 percent of the projected daily sewage flow (e.g. a maximum of 45 gallons per cycle for a system sized for a four-bedroom house). A rule of thumb is about four inches in a concrete two-compartment septic tank, or two inches in a single compartment dosing septic tank.
 - Pressure distribution drainfields can receive no more than 20 percent of the projected daily sewage flow (e.g. a maximum of 90 gallons per cycle for a system sized for a four-bedroom house). A rule of thumb is about eight inches in a concrete two-compartment septic tank, or four inches in a single compartment dosing septic tank.
- **Inspect the screen around the pump** at least once each year. The screen needs to be cleaned when it is about 50 percent clogged. Wash the pump screen over the septic tank manhole.
 - **Flush sand filter and pressure distribution drainfield pipes.** Sand filter and pressure distribution systems constructed after 1995 should have cleaning valves at the ground surface. Flush the lateral pressure distribution pipes within the sand filter and pressure distribution system at least once a year. Flush each lateral pipe separately and be mindful of the liquid level in the tank (do not run the pump dry).

Cars require air and oil filter inspections, cleaning and replacement to keep performing, and these systems do too. These systems are expensive to construct and need regular maintenance to last as long as possible



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For more information about the Onsite Program, please visit:

www.oregon.gov/DEQ/Residential/Pages/Onsite.aspx

For a list of certified Maintenance Providers,

visit: <http://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/onsite/sdssearch.asp>

Alternative Formats

Documents can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills.

To request a document in another format or language, call DEQ in Portland at 503-229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 800-452-4011, ext. 5696; or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.