



Septic Systems in Galveston County

When we flush our toilet, take a bath or even run a load of laundry we generate wastewater that must be properly treated before it is returned to the environment. People that live in cities with a public sewage collection system can usually flush and forget about what happens to the wastewater they just generated. The city takes care of proper wastewater treatment at the sewage treatment plant. People in rural areas have to be more involved in their wastewater treatment method.

Septic systems (more formally called on-site sewage facilities) are the common way that people treat and properly discharge domestic wastewater into the environment when public sewage disposal systems are not available. The choice of the system depends on many factors. Some of those factors include:

- Depth of groundwater
- Soil texture (sandy to clay soils)
- Location of water wells
- Location of ponds, bayous etc.
- Other factors

Steps in Obtaining a Septic System Permit

Before any work is done on a septic system, be it a new installation or a repair, a permit must be obtained from the Galveston County Health District. The basic steps in obtaining the permit includes:

1. Contact the building official in the area that the home is to be located to acquire any permits needed to build a structure in the area.
2. Before any contractor can absolutely tell you what your septic system options are, he must visit the property and conduct a site evaluation to determine all the limiting factors associated with the design of a septic system.
3. Based on the site evaluation findings a septic system plan is prepared and submitted with the appropriate fee to the Health District for approval.
4. After having been given approval to construct the septic system by the Health District, the septic system may be installed by a licensed septic system contractor. Construction permits are valid for one year and if construction is not completed within that year the system must be re-permitted.
5. After construction is complete the Health District makes a construction inspection to verify that the system has been installed according to the approved planning materials.

When you hire a licensed contractor to help you decide what septic system is best for you, consider the following table. “No” indicates that the septic system option is not available for the stated condition. “Yes” indicates that the septic system option is available for the stated condition.

Condition		Standard Drainfield	Low Pressure Dosing	Drip Emitters^A	Spray Application^A	Mound Systems
Soil Type	1a Grave	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
	1b san	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	2 sandy loam	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	3 sandy clay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	4 clay	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Depth of adequate soil below application depth	2 or more feet	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	1 foot	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Less than 1 foot	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Groundwater below application depth	2 or more feet	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	1 foot	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Less than 1 foot	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Perpetual Maintenance Contract Required^B		No	No	Yes	Yes	No

^AWith aerobic treatment tank.

^B All systems using aerobic secondary treatment tanks must have a perpetual maintenance contract and report to GCHD at least three times each year.

Site-specific conditions and professional design may affect the options suggested in the above table.

If you have any questions regarding septic systems, please call the Galveston County Health District On-site Sewage Facility Program at 409-938-2411.