

Town of Dighton
Homeowner's Guide to
Title 5 Septic System Repairs
Information and Process

- 1) Title 5 Inspection – This is the first step in the process. Within 2 years of a property transfer, a Title 5 inspection must be performed by a licensed Title 5 Inspector. The Board of Health has a list of current licensed Title 5 Inspectors. The inspection involves digging up and inspecting components of the septic system, generally the septic tank and distribution box. The tank will be pumped as part of the inspection, so do not pump it in advance of the inspection. If the system passes inspection, the Inspector will prepare a report that must be submitted and reviewed by the Board of Health, along with a \$50 review fee. The inspection report must contain floor plans of the existing home (hand drawn by the owner is acceptable). The Health Agent will visit your property to confirm that all work required for the inspection was completed. If the system fails, proceed to step 2.
- 2) Hire an Engineer – A Massachusetts licensed engineer is required to prepare a design to repair the system. The Board of Health can provide a list of engineers who regularly work in town, if requested. Once retained, the engineer will continue with the process by setting up a percolation test.
- 3) Percolation Test – An application and \$225 fee need to be submitted to the Board of Health. The Conservation Commission Agent will review the application to determine if a filing with the Conservation Commission is required, prior to a date being scheduled. The Health Agent needs to be onsite to witness the testing. The Health Agent will contact your engineer to schedule a date. Generally there is a wait of 1-2 weeks. The excavating contractor will also be required to have the utilities marked out by contacting DigSafe and the Dighton Water Department, and to obtain a trench permit from the Building Department in order to perform the excavation.

Holes, at least two, need to be excavated to a depth of 10 feet. Access is required for a backhoe or excavator to access your yard. The backhoe is 8 ½ feet wide. Sections of fencing may need to be removed. There will be damage to the property as a result of the digging, not only the holes, but also possible breakage of tree branches, irrigation systems, walkways. There is no need to clean up the yard, as the area of the testing will be altered for the installation of the system. There is no need to have the system pumped the day before the day of the testing.

On the day of the testing, the design engineer and Health Agent will need access to the home for two reasons: A) to locate the sewer and water pipes in the basement, and B) to possibly do a bedroom determination and count. The engineer may also need running water at an outside spigot.

The deep holes and percolation testing are being done to determine the depth to water table and the infiltration rate of the soil on site. The depth to water table will set the height of the system, while the percolation rate will determine the size of the system.

- 4) Design Plan – The engineer will prepare the design plan based on the results of the deep holes and percolation testing. The system will be sized on the number of bedrooms and if there is a garbage disposal, not on the number of bathrooms. A bedroom is defined as a room intended for privacy of at least 70 sq. ft. with a door, window, and electrical service. A closet is not a requirement. Floor plans will need to be submitted with the application. These plans can be hand drawn on 8 ½" x 11" paper by the homeowner.
- 5) For new construction, a plan must meet all the requirements of Title 5. For a septic repair, waivers or variances may be granted to fit the system in given site constraints. Certain waivers and variances may require notifying abutters. Certain waivers will also involve placing a bedroom deed restriction on the property preventing increasing the number of bedrooms in the dwelling. The engineer will prepare the document.
- 6) Town Review – The plan, application, fee, and floor plans will be submitted to the Board of Health for review. Any comments or revisions required will be communicated to the design engineer for revisions. After the revisions are made, the revised plan will be submitted to the Board of Health with a fee of \$75 for a revised plan. Once all revisions are made, the Board of Health will approve the permit, and notify the design engineer. The permit is valid for 3 years.
- 7) Installation – A septic installer licensed in the Town of Dighton must be used to install the system. The Board of Health can provide a list of licensed installers, if requested. Once a homeowner chooses an installer, you must let the Board of Health office know, so that we may complete the permit. Once approval is received, the contractor may begin installation.
Weather conditions may affect the cost of the system and the amount of time to install. As a result of the installation, the yard may look different – a mound, a vent pipe, a retaining wall. There are ways to lessen the harshness of a mound or a vent pipe, such as using shrubs, wishing well, or fencing.

- 8) Inspections – The Board of Health and design engineer will perform inspections at several points along the installation. If plumbing is being altered, a plumbing permit from the Building Department will be required. If a pump is proposed, an electrical permit from the Building Department will be required.
- 9) Certificate of Compliance – Once completed, the engineer will prepare an as-built plan, which certifies the system was constructed as designed. The Health Agent will review the plan and perform a site inspection before issuing. The Certificate of Compliance will need to be signed by the Installer and the Health Agent prior to being released.
- 10) Appeals – If either the homeowner or the engineer disagree with any of the findings or decisions of the Health Agent, they may request a hearing in front of the Board of Health.

11) Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) links:

Septic System Information / Maintenance / Pumping:

Information on what a septic system is, frequency of pumping, caring for a septic system, including do's and don'ts.

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/caring-for-your-septic-system>

Buying or Selling a Home:

When an inspection is required, and the process of a Title 5 Inspection. Includes an explanation of a conditional pass or a failure.

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/buying-or-selling-property-with-a-septic-system>

Massachusetts Tax Credit Info:

The Commonwealth provides a tax credit of up to \$6,000 over 4 years to defray the cost of septic repairs to a primary residence. Forms are available from the Department of Revenue to enable homeowners to claim up to \$6,000 in tax credits for septic upgrades.

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/view-residential-property-tax-credits>