



Hanover County Department of Public Works

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Frequently asked Questions - Septic Tank Pump-out Program

1. Why am I being required to have my septic tank pumped out or inspected before the septic tank is full?

Virginia State law requires anyone within a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area (CBPA) to have their septic tank pumped or inspected once every five years. Research has shown that failing septic systems contribute considerable amounts of pollution to groundwater and the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. By having your septic tank pumped, the number of solids leaving the septic tank and migrating into the drainfield is greatly reduced, allowing your drainfield to function as designed for a much greater length of time and reducing groundwater pollution.

2. What is a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area (CBPA)?

In Hanover County under State law certain areas with features have been identified as requiring higher environmental protection, these areas are commonly referred to as Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas (CBPA). A large portion of the Hanover County falls within a CBPA. It may surprise many people that a CBPA does not only include areas close to streams, wetlands and floodplains (**areas referred to as Resource Protection Areas, RPA**) but also can include upland areas with erodible soils, steep slopes or highly permeable soils (**areas referred to as Resource Management Areas, RMA**). In some instances your survey plat may indicate if your lot is within a CBPA. This is often not the case and a sight specific determination is necessary to determine if your septic system is in a CBPA.

3. Should I wait to receive a notice, every five years, before having my septic tank pumped-out or inspected?

You can. In order to balance the work load for haulers, the amount of septage delivered for treatment, and the administrative work load for the County, the County will be notifying approximately one-fifth of County residents each year about these requirements. You can have your septic tank pumped at anytime over the five year period or wait to receive the notice. Again, only those properties with their drainfields located within a CBPA are required to be pumped out every five years. While not required, regular pumping of septic tanks every five years is recommended for the proper long term operation of your septic system.

4. Is everyone in Hanover County required to have their septic tank pumped out or inspected?

No. A limited number of drainfields are not located in the CBPA. If you like, you can provide information to Hanover County documenting that your on-site sewage disposal system is not located within a CBPA or call the Department of Public Works at (804) 365-6181 for assistance.

Also, a few systems have plastic filters permitted by the Virginia Department of Health. These systems are also not required to pump-out every five (5) years because they routinely require more frequent maintenance. If you have an approved plastic filter, you may submit evidence and request being removed from the program. The Virginia Department of Health does not have a list of systems with approved plastic filters. Regular pumping and maintenance will save you money and protect the environment.

5. Tell me more about the exemption for systems with Virginia Department of Health approved plastic filters.

The law provides for an exemption from the mandatory pump-out requirement if your septic system has a Virginia Department of Health approved plastic filter installed. If your system already has such a filter, you only need to notify the County of this fact. If you desire to have a filter installed, you can contact a drainfield installer who can assist you with obtaining the required permit from the Virginia Department of Health and install the plastic filter for you or, if you are handy, you can contact the Virginia Department of Health, obtain the required permit and modify your system yourself. Plastic filters require regular maintenance to keep them from clogging and backing sewage into your home. Routine maintenance typically includes the removal and proper disposal of non-biodegradable solids from the filter and then hosing down the filter over your septic tank to return the filtered solids to the tank for additional treatment. While not mandatory, the Virginia Department of Health still recommends that systems with plastic filters pump have their septic tanks pumped regularly to maintain peak system performance and extend the life of your drainfield.

6. Is everyone receiving this notice at the same time?

No. Although the requirement to pump-out or inspect septic tanks has been around for several years, Hanover County realizes that many people may not have been aware of it. In order to balance the anticipated work load on septic haulers operating in the area and on the County's Department of Public Utilities, approximately one-fifth of the owners of properties with septic tanks will be notified each year. Initial notifications are being sent out based on a grid system. Once we receive specific information about when your system was last pumped-out or inspected, you will be sent a reminder notice about 5 years after this date.

7. Who do I contact to have my septic system pumped out or inspected?

You may contact any sewage handler licensed to operate within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Please refer to the telephone directory yellow pages under "Septic" for contact information.

8. If I have had my septic system pumped-out within the last five years, do I need to have it pumped-out again in order to comply with the County's pump-out program?

No. If your septic system has been pumped out within the last five (5) years, you only need to provide the date your system was pumped out to the county. You should have your septic tank pumped out again within a five (5) year period from its last pump-out.

9. If my house and septic system is less than five (5) years old do I need to have my septic tank pumped?

No. If your septic tank is less than five (5) years old provide us the date your septic tank was placed in service. You should have your septic tank pumped out before your system has been in operation for five (5) years.

10. What if I have multiple septic systems on my property?

If you have more than one (1) septic system located on a single parcel of land, each septic tank must be pumped out every five (5) years. Please provide us the information for each septic tank.

11. What if I don't know where my septic tank is located or if I even have a septic tank?

The Hanover County Department of Health may have the location of your septic tank system or a licensed sewage handler might be able to assist you in locating your septic system. If you are unsure if you even have a septic system, the Hanover County Department of Health or a licensed plumber will be able to assist you in the location and means of sewage discharge.

12. What if I don't know when my septic tank has been pumped-out?

If you don't know when your septic tank was last pumped-out you should schedule an appointment to have it inspected by a licensed sewage handler and pumped out if necessary. After your inspection or pump-out, notify the Department of Public Works of the results.

13. Do I have to keep records?

You should keep records for five (5) years. A receipt from you septic hauler is usually all that is required.

14. What if I have an alternative septic system?

Most alternative systems require additional maintenance beyond what is required for a traditional septic system. Pumping the septic tank (which is still a component of an alternative system) should be done regularly. These systems should be maintained according to manufacturer's specifications. Typically annual maintenance is required. If you have a question about maintenance for your alternative septic system, please contact your maintenance service provider. For inquiries about alternative systems, please contact the Hanover Health Department at (804) 365-4343.

15. Who is responsible for costs associated with required maintenance of my on-site sewer system?

The property owner is responsible for all costs.

16. If I need more information who should I contact?

Contact the Hanover County Department of Public Works at (804)365-6181.