



Public Health
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North Central Public Health District
"Caring For Our Communities."

Septic Site Selection

Quick Guide

The suitability of a proposed site for a septic systems is determined by the site and soil conditions and depth/seasonality of the water table.

Other factors include property size, locations of surface waters, wells, cuts and fills. There must also be enough area for a full future re-placement septic system.

Landscape position, landforms, sloping terrain, structures, and paved surfaces affect surface and subsurface drainage patterns that can in turn affect system location.

Once a potentially suitable site for a septic system has been chosen, a site evaluation and a soil test must be performed.

Several physical characteristics and uses of the land where septic systems are to be located may affect the suitability of the site.

- 1) Slope of the land cannot be too steep. To install a standard subsurface system the slope should not exceed 30% . The maximum allowable slope for a "steep slope system" is 45% . Installation of any system becomes more difficult as slope increases.
- 2) Landscape features that retain or concentrate surface and subsurface flows such as swales, depressions, and/or floodplains must be avoided.
- 3) Bottomlands have significantly deeper soils but have extremely poor subsurface drainage and should be avoided.
- 4) Rock outcrops may indicate areas of land where bedrock is close to the surface and soil cover is limited, and may need to be avoided.
- 5) Vegetation cover on the ground surface may give a preliminary indication of the type of soil beneath, or the presence of ground water. For example:
 - A) Water loving plants such as reeds and sedges may indicate the presence of ground water, and therefore, may need to be avoided.
 - B) Open areas, with minimal vegetation or shallow rooting grasses may indicate a narrow soil depth or high soil compaction and may not be a good location for a septic system.
 - C) Shrubs and trees that are woody perennials exhibit rooting habits that vary from deep tap roots to branched roots and indicate significantly deeper soils. Roots distributed throughout the soil indicate the soil has adequate porosity and may be good for a septic system.
- 6) Septic systems should be situated where there will never be any possibility of future vehicular traffic. Driveways, parking or storage areas, snowmobile or bike trails should not pass over any part of the sewage disposal system.

Setback Requirements

Minimum separation distances between septic systems and various natural and manmade features must be maintained. The reasons for setbacks are, in general, to guard against contamination of streams, groundwater, or drinking water supplies; to prevent surfacing of effluent; and to avoid interference by groundwater.

Items Requiring Setback	From Subsurface Absorption Area Including Replacement Area	From Septic Tank and Other Treatment Units, Effluent Sewer and Distribution Units
1. Groundwater Supplies and Wells.	*100'	50'
2. Springs:		
• Upgradient.	50'	50'
• Downgradient.	100'	50'
**3. Surface Public Waters:		
• Year round.	100'	50'
• Seasonal.	50'	50'
4. Intermittent Streams:		
• Piped (watertight not less than 25' from any part of the on-site system).	20'	20'
• Unpiped.	50'	50'
5. Groundwater Interceptors:		
• On a slope of 3% or less.	20'	10'
• On a slope greater than 3%:		
• Upgradient.	10'	5'
• Downgradient.	50'	10'
6. Irrigation Canals:		
• Lined (watertight canal).	25'	25'
• Unlined:		
• Upgradient.	25'	25'
• Downgradient.	50'	50'
7. Cuts Manmade in Excess of 30 Inches (top of downslope cut):		
• Which Intersect Layers that Limit Effective Soil Depth Within 48 Inches of Surface.	50'	25'
• Which Do Not Intersect Layers that Limit Effective Soil Depth.	25'	10'
8. Escarpments:		
• Which Intersect Layers that Limit Effective Soil Depth.	50'	10'
• Which Do Not Intersect Layers that Limit Effective Soil Depth.	25'	10'
9. Property Lines.	10'	5'
10. Water Lines.	10'	10'
11. Foundation Lines of any Building, Including Garages and Out Buildings.	10'	5'
12. Underground Utilities.	10'	—
* 50-foot setback for wells constructed with special standards granted by WRD.		
**This does not prevent stream crossings of pressure effluent sewers.		