



# Homebuyer's Guide to Septic Systems

**Inspection Procedure** If the home you are buying is on a septic system you should request an inspection and assessment of the system. By law, only a state-licensed septic tank contractor or plumber or a certified environmental health professional can inspect and assess your septic system. The evaluator must provide you a copy of the Department of Health *Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems* and written notice of your right to request an evaluation based on all or part of the standards.

**Tank Inspection** All system tanks should be pumped and visually inspected to determine their capacity and water tightness. The evaluator will look for cracks, leaks and other defects in the tanks, as well as, required outlet devices or filters and the condition and fit of the lid and access ports. If the tank was pumped and evaluated in the last 5 years that documentation may be used.

**Drainfield Inspection** The drainfield area should be probed to determine its location, size, configuration, and type of drainfield material. The inspector will note signs of failure and any drainage that impacts the drainfield area. The elevation of the drainfield above the seasonal high watertable should be made as this separation is critical for proper treatment.

**Additional Components** If your system contains additional components, such as pumps or alarms, they should also be inspected. Dosing pumps should be checked to verify correct operation and alarms are in working order.

**Assessment** The evaluator will provide you a signed report. The report must indicate if the system is, in the evaluator's opinion, a sanitary nuisance and any maintenance needs. A sample report form is on the reverse side of this information sheet.

**Q:** Why would I request a voluntary septic system inspection?

**A:** These systems are underground and may have been out of use for some time. Repairs or system modifications may be costly. A system evaluation would allow these costs to be addressed during sale negotiations.

**Q:** Where can I obtain a copy of the "Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems?"

**A:** A copy is available online—[www.MyFloridaHealth.gov](http://www.MyFloridaHealth.gov) under Environmental Health, Onsite Sewage Programs, Forms and Publications.

**Q:** If the evaluation shows my system is substandard, will I be required to upgrade the system?

**A:** No. The evaluation is for your use. The department does not receive a copy and no enforcement action will be taken based on the report. The report is intended to let you make an informed decision.

**Q:** Is a permit required to correct any deficiencies?

**A:** Yes. All repairs or modifications to an onsite sewage system require a construction permit from the Department of Health, Environmental Health Office in your county.

**Q:** Does an evaluation assure me that my system will function properly for years to come?

**A:** No. The evaluation provides an assessment of your system, but is not designed to determine precise code compliance or show that the system will serve your intended use.

**Q:** If the evaluation was not performed in accordance with the "Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems" what can I do?

**A:** You may file a complaint with the Department of Health in your county or call the Bureau of Environmental Health at 850-245-4070.

Avoid flushing thousands of dollars in repairs down the drain. Maintain your septic system. Have your septic tank inspected and pumped out every three to five years by a licensed septic tank contractor. To find one, go to [MyFloridaEH.com](http://MyFloridaEH.com).



## Division of Disease Control and Health Protection Bureau of Environmental Health

4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-08 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1710

**850.245.4070**

[www.floridahealth.gov/environmentalhealth](http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmentalhealth)

Law Implemented: 381.0065, Florida Statutes. Rule Authority: Chapter 64E-6.001, Florida Administrative Code.

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# Voluntary Inspection and Assessment Report

## Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of an Existing Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal System

Property Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: Florida Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

I have ownership, control or use of the onsite sewage treatment and disposal system at the property listed above and request an inspection except for the items I have initialed to request that they be excluded.

Signature of requestor: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of requestor: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tank Inspection:</b>	
<b>Owner's initials to request that the tank inspection NOT be included</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> The tank has been pumped and capacity is: _____ gallons. <input type="checkbox"/> I have waived the pumping requirement because proof of a tank pumping, permitted new installation, permitted repair, or permitted modification can be documented within the previous five years, and the document states the capacity of the tank and that the condition of the tank does not constitute a sanitary nuisance.  My visual inspection of the tank when the tank was empty detected the following cracks, leaks, or other defects:  _____ _____	Baffles or tees are intact and secure: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Outlet device <input type="checkbox"/> present <input type="checkbox"/> not present Condition: _____ Effluent filters <input type="checkbox"/> present <input type="checkbox"/> not present Condition: _____ Compartment walls <input type="checkbox"/> present <input type="checkbox"/> not present Condition: _____ Structural defects in the tank: _____ Condition and fit of the tank lid, including manholes: _____  <input type="checkbox"/> The tank, in my professional opinion, is in danger of being damaged by leaving the tank empty after inspection, and was refilled with water prior to concluding the inspection.

<b>Drainfield Inspection:</b>	
<b>Owner's initials to request that the drainfield inspection NOT be included.</b>	
I have probed the drainfield area to determine its location and approximate size. Drainfield size: _____ sq. ft. Describe drainfield location: _____ Drainfield configuration: <input type="checkbox"/> Bed <input type="checkbox"/> Trench Drainfield is made of: <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Aggregate <input type="checkbox"/> Non-mineral aggregate <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic chambers. Indications of previous failure: _____	Is there ponded water within the drainfield? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Is there even distribution of effluent in the field? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Are there downspouts or drains that encroach or drain into the drainfield area? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Based on augering and examining soils in the area of the drainfield, the estimated seasonal high water table in the area of the drainfield is: _____ inches <input type="checkbox"/> above <input type="checkbox"/> below the bottom of the drainfield.

<b>Pump, Siphon, Alarm Inspection:</b>	
<b>Owner's initials to request that pumps, siphons and alarms NOT be inspected.</b>	
Dosing tank integrity: _____ Approximate volume of dosing tank: _____ Material used in construction of the dosing tank (i.e., concrete, fiberglass, plastic): _____ Is the pump elevated off the bottom of the chamber? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Pump operational status: _____ If there is a check valve, is a purge hole present? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	Type of alarm ( <input type="checkbox"/> audio <input type="checkbox"/> visual <input type="checkbox"/> both) Location of alarm: _____ Does the alarm work? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Do electrical connections appear satisfactory? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Can surface water infiltrate into the tank? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Was the pump tank pumped out? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no

<b>Assessment:</b>
In my professional opinion, the system <input type="checkbox"/> is <input type="checkbox"/> is not a sanitary nuisance through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> allowing the discharge of untreated or improperly treated human waste.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the improperly built or maintained sewage treatment tank.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the creation, maintenance or causing of any condition capable of breeding flies, mosquitoes or any other arthropods capable of transmitting diseases directly or indirectly to humans.</li> </ul> The following maintenance needs to be performed on the system: _____

<b>Disclosure Statements:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> I detected cracks, leaks, improper fit or other defects in the tank, manholes or lid. The following damaged or defective item or tank must be properly corrected: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I detected missing or damaged components of the system. The following missing or damaged component must be replaced or an approvable replacement must be reinstalled in the system: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I detected the following previous failure indicators: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I detected ponding of the drainfield or uneven distribution of effluent. The extent of the ponding or uneven distribution is as follows: _____  <input type="checkbox"/> I detected the following downspouts or other stormwater or other source of water directed toward the system and they should be re-directed away from the system: _____  <input type="checkbox"/> I detected the seasonal high water table at or above the elevation of the drainfield. There is an increased probability of system malfunction due to the presence of groundwater at these levels. <input type="checkbox"/> I detected the following condition or situation existing on the site at the time of the inspection that, in my opinion, would possibly interfere with or restrict any future repair or modification to the existing system: _____

I am a  master septic tank contractor  registered septic tank contractor  state-licensed plumber  certified environmental health professional.

Inspection date: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspector's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspector's printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspector's address: \_\_\_\_\_

A copy of the Procedure for Voluntary Inspection and Assessment of Existing Systems is required to accompany this report.