

Defiance County Operation & Maintenance Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of a septic system?

Operation assumes a septic system is functioning as intended to treat wastewater. Maintenance assumes the septic system be *monitored* so that it will continue to work as intended.

Proper operation and maintenance includes but is not limited to a homeowner's knowledge on their septic system; proper septic tank pumping; electrical and mechanical components functional; repairs conducted as necessary.

2. What are the upcoming meetings for (January 30 and February 5)?

These are public input meetings, to educate the public on the REQUIREMENT for the O&M program. Regulations are not yet finalized. We are hoping to get feedback from the public.

3. What if I cannot attend the meeting(s)? Will these be the only meetings for the Operation and Maintenance program?

The PowerPoint presentation will be available on our website. You can find the presentation and more information on O&M at defiancecohealth.org/myseptic. You can also call out office at 419-784-3818 if you have specific questions.

We will have additional meetings that are targeted toward affected homeowners in affected townships, prior to applications being sent out.

4. Who should attend these meetings?

Anyone with a private septic system; if you live in Defiance county, and have a private septic system this applies to you. If you pay a sewer bill to Defiance or another municipality this does not apply to you

Approximately 6,100 (36%) of homes in Defiance County use septic systems.

5. Why is O&M a requirement?

The intent of the law is for owners to be responsible for the maintenance of their systems. Advocates for lower cost repairs (if needed) to systems rather than replacement.

6. How can you mandate this?

Ohio Law requires county health departments to adopt rules for operation and maintenance of private septic systems. This requires all health districts to implement an operation and maintenance program for private sewage systems. Although many county regulations may be similar from one county to the other, Defiance County Health Department regulations may not mirror another county, and vice versa.

7. What if I take care of my septic system already?

This is good to hear! Caring for your septic system can help prolong the life of the system. Regular pumping of septic tanks can help improve the life of your septic system, and helps to ensure the system is functioning as intended.

You will still have to apply for an operation and maintenance permit when the time comes.

8. What does the O&M permit entail/require?

There is a \$60 permit fee and application. The permit requires renewal every 4 years.

Home (or property) owner will have to provide evidence of maintenance within the permit period. "Evidence" can include:

- Homeowners can provide past pumping reports to show the tank has been pumped.
- Must pump your system per guidelines or per registered contractor recommendations and findings.
- Inspection from a contractor
- Inspection from homeowner—this requires homeowner registration.

9. How much will it cost to have my septic tank pumped?

Cost may vary depending on the size, content, and type of septic tank. The Health Department registers and licenses Septic Haulers. Contact our office if you would like a list of registered septic haulers. A list of septic haulers is also available on our website.



10. When do I have to apply for a permit?

The Health Department took an Environmental Impact approach in rolling out the O&M program. Permit dates will follow the following schedule:

Defiance, Noble, Richland	Mail: April 2019, Due: June 30, 2019
Adams, Delaware, Highland	Mail: April 2020, Due: June 30, 2020
Hicksville, Mark, Tiffin	Mail: April 2021, Due: June 30, 2021
Farmer, Milford, Washington	Mail: April 2022, Due: June 30, 2022

The Health Department will send an application to you when it is time to apply for your O&M permit. If you do not know what township you reside in, contact the Defiance County Auditor's Office or us.

11. Will the Health Department come on my property?

Defiance County Health Department hopes to provide homeowners the ability to allow homeowners options in satisfying the O&M requirement

To keep homeowner costs low, we DO NOT intend to go on the majority of the properties

We MAY go on the property if

- We do not have any records of a septic system on the property
- Homeowner fails to apply for an O&M permit, when required.

12. If the Health Department is not coming on my property, what is the point in a permit fee?

Funds generated by the permits will provide owner education on maintenance of septic systems.

The department will set up a tracking system (pump reports, inspection records) to ensure that proper maintenance is being performed, helping prevent premature failure of septic systems.

Funds generated by the program can only be used by the Health Department for the district's sewage program.

When needed, enforce repairs or other maintenance requirements.

13. Will my system need replaced?

We hope not. If you meet the O&M requirements (Apply for a permit, evidence of Maintenance during permit period) and there IS NO EVIDENCE OF SYSTEM FAILURE we do not require a system replacement.

Systems that met design standards when installed DO NOT have to meet the design standards in current sewage rules—they just have to be working.

IF YOUR SYSTEM is failing, it could be repaired, if possible.

IF YOUR SYSTEM is in complete failure, it is likely it will need to be replaced. There is currently some grant funding available for repair and replacement.

14. Who can pump my septic tank and how will the Health Department know if was pumped?

Septic Haulers are licensed by the Health Department. The companies can vary year to year, but on average, we have eight haulers registered each year. See "Registered Septic Hauler" link for more information.

Septic Haulers are required to send pump reports to the Health Department. We review the reports once received, enter them in a database, and file them with the property records.

15. Septic tank risers were brought up at the meeting. What are risers? Do I need them?

Risers allow easy access to the tank chambers to allow access for inspection and pumping. Installing septic tank risers should save money on labor in the end; materials cost around \$100-\$150 each and can be purchased locally.

The Health Department can provide more information on riser installation upon request.



16. If I do my own inspection am I responsible for sending in the inspection report?

Yes. To do your own inspection you must attend a training and become registered to inspect your own property. The training will explain the inspection report and detail how to conduct the inspection and fill out the inspection report.

17. What are other counties doing?

Each county develops their own O & M program. Defiance County is seeking community input before implementing this program.

18. What are co-ops and is Defiance County looking at doing a co-op?

A co-op is a sewer district. The Health Department does not have plans to implement a co-op or sewer district.

19. If I call your office can I get information on my property?

Yes. The Health Department has records dating back to the 1940s. If you contact our office, we can look up your property, and provide any information on the property.

20. I have an old system and no one knows where it is. Why should I do something about my system if it is working?

To properly maintain your system, it is important to know where your system is located. Eventually it will need to be pumped. You will be required under the O & M program to locate/maintain your system.

21. What constitutes a “nuisance”?

The Health Department has uploaded a document to further explain what qualifies a nuisance. Please see the link: [Conditions Under Which a Septic System Causes a Public Health Nuisance](#)

22. How would the Health Department get involved in a nuisance, or come on my property?

If a neighbor or resident call and reports a nuisance, the Health Department will investigate. IF you fail to register your property with the O & M program, the Health Department will investigate.

23. What if my system was already pumped or does not need to be pumped?

IF the inspection report shows that the system does not need to be pumped, you do not need to pump it. Inspection pump reports are sent to the Health Department.

24. What is the “teeth” in the Law? How will you police?

Contractors send pump reports to the HD. If you fail to register with the O & M program or provide an inspection report, eventually the Health Department will need to investigate. The Health Department wants to work with community member before it gets to the point.

25. If I pay \$60 for a permit, self-inspect and do not pump or properly maintain my system, what triggers enforcement.

Failure to maintain your septic system is harmful to your health, and the system. IF there is a nuisance, the Health Department will inspect. IF the resident is unwilling to work with the Health Department to have the nuisance abated, the county prosecutor may get involved.

26. I have never seen toxic algae in the river. Do we really have a problem?

There have been two laboratory confirms Harmful Algal Blooms since 2016. Toxic algae do not always appear as deep green or look “harmful”. Sometimes the algae that looks harmful is not.

27. What is the main consequence if my system is causing a nuisance and I cannot afford to have it replaced?

The Health Department will work with resident; if a repair is possible, a system can be repaired rather than replaced. There is currently funding (WPCLF) available (income based) for repairs and replacements.

28. I applied the WPCLF funding and did not get it. My system has not failed yet. I cannot afford a new system. DO I have to wait until my system fails to receive funding? What do I do?

Funding has been going to systems that have failed or are failing and causing a nuisance. You do not have to wait for your system to completely fail to qualify. If the system is observed in disrepair, you may qualify for funding. Contact our office for more information on this funding



29. What if there are multiple home on one septic system?

This type of system is called a Small Flow System. The person owning the parcel will be responsible for operation permits and inspections.

30. Does have a garbage disposal effect my septic system?

Yes, having a garbage disposal will cause the system to fill more quickly, and will likely require a septic tank be pumped more frequently.

31. If there are only two people living in my home, will I need my system pumped as often as larger families?

The Health Department has a recommended schedule that takes into account family size and size of the septic tank. The purpose of the inspection is to determine how often the tank needs pumped. If the inspection shows the tank does not need pumped, you will not need it pumped.

Our office will try to keep this FAQ sheet updated as possible when additional questions arise.