

# Wood County Sanitary Permit Program

## *A Citizen's Guide*

A publication of the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office, 400 Market Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-8095

### Where to Begin?

The regulatory framework for installing septic systems, holding tanks and other systems designed to handle liquid waste is provided by Wisconsin's Uniform Plumbing Code. The Wood County Planning & Zoning Office is the County agency responsible for the regulation and inspection of septic systems as well as the issuance of sanitary permits. The purpose of the sanitary permit is to allow installation, repair or alteration of the septic system as described on the approved permit application. The soil and groundwater conditions reported for the property form the basis for a sanitary permit application, as do any plans submitted along with the application.

The intent of this citizen's guide is to help you understand the process that must be followed to install a new or replacement septic system on your building site or property.

#### Step One

### The Soil Test Report

The first step required to obtain a sanitary permit is to contact a certified soil tester (CST) to evaluate the soil conditions on your property. Most soil testing requires that a backhoe be used to dig pits so the CST can identify soil characteristics and so a detailed soil profile can be prepared. The CST should do a thorough evaluation of the soils over the ENTIRE acreage of the property. The best soil conditions should be identified and recorded so the "Master Plumber" can design a system that utilizes these soils if possible. After the CST completes the work, you should receive a copy of the soil report form. It is the responsibility of the CST and plumber to explain to you the type of septic systems most suitable for your property.



#### Step Two

### Sanitary Permit Issuance

Before a sanitary permit application can be reviewed and a permit issued, the following information must be submitted to the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office:

1. Sanitary permit application form.
2. A completed soil report form.
3. A set of approved plans.
4. A recorded holding tank agreement or septic tank maintenance affidavit.
5. Appropriate permit application fee.

**SANITARY PERMIT APPLICATION.** The sanitary permit is the regulatory device for assuring compliance with State statutes and the Wisconsin Uniform Plumbing Code and for granting permission to install a private sewage system. Permit application forms are completed by the plumber and are submitted to the Planning & Zoning Office along with the septic system design and proposed development's location. After your sanitary permit application has been approved, you will receive a copy of the application form and a sanitary permit card to post at the site. The sanitary permit card is your official notice that the proposed sewage system design is approved and a building permit can be applied for from the local municipality.



**STATE PLAN REVIEW.** All septic system plans EXCEPT CONVENTIONAL SYSTEM DESIGNS are required to be sent to the State for review and approval. Only plumbers holding "Master Plumber" or "Master Plumber Restricted Sewer" licenses can design septic systems and assume responsibility for their installations. The State has 15 business days to review the plans. Plan review fees vary and are based on the required tank capacity and the structure's anticipated daily wastewater flow. If the plans are incomplete, further review is withheld until the requested information is received or corrected. Once the plans are approved, an original stamped set of plans is returned to the plumber who, in turn, can then submit the stamped set of plans to the Planning & Zoning Office along with a sanitary permit application.

Continued on Page 2 →

**NOTE: ABOUT HALF OF WISCONSIN'S SOILS ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR CONVENTIONAL, BELOW GRADE SEPTIC SYSTEMS AND WILL REQUIRE AN ABOVE GRADE TYPE DESIGN.**

**THE SEPTIC TANK MAINTENANCE AFFIDAVIT.** The affidavit is required to be signed by all permit applicants whose permit applications show use of a septic tank. The signing and recording of the document obligates the property owner to pump the septic tank or have it inspected at least once every three years. The septic tank affidavit has been found to be a useful management tool used to prevent system failure by informing the system's owner as to the appropriate time to have the tank serviced. If you receive notice to sign an affidavit, please bring your tax slip for your property along with the recording fee of \$11.00 to the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office

or

**HOLDING TANK AGREEMENT.** A holding tank agreement must be signed by the property owner and Wood County before a holding tank permit can be issued. The agreement binds the current and future owners of the property to the terms and conditions listed. If you are required to sign a holding tank agreement, please make sure the full legal description is placed on the document. Refer to your property deed or tax slip for the correct legal description. Incorrect or incomplete legal descriptions may cause a delay in processing your permit application.

**HOLDING TANK AGREEMENT FORMS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE COUNTY PLANNING & ZONING OFFICE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. APPOINTMENTS WILL NOT BE SCHEDULED UNTIL THE WOOD COUNTY PLANNING & ZONING OFFICE HAS RECEIVED A SOIL TEST REPORT AND HAS HAD ADEQUATE TIME TO REVIEW THE REPORTED SOIL CONDITIONS.**

**TYPES OF SEWAGE SYSTEMS AND RELATED PERMIT APPLICATION FEES FOR WOOD COUNTY**

Conventional System.....	\$275.00
Systems-in-fill.....	\$375.00
Holding tanks.....	\$375.00
At-grade system.....	\$375.00
In-ground pressure system.....	\$375.00
Mound system.....	\$375.00
Alternate type design system.....	\$375.00
Reconnection to existing system.....	\$150.00
Sanitary permit renewal.....	\$ 25.00
Sanitary permit transfer.....	\$ 25.00
Recording fee (one-sided document).....	\$ 11.00

**Step Three**

**Permit Review**

**SANITARY PERMIT REVIEW.** When a sanitary permit application is submitted to the Planning & Zoning Office, it sets in motion a series of environmental and zoning reviews designed to check the proposed development's construction for compliance with State and County land use regulations. The first review is of the proposed septic system plans and their compatibility with State plumbing code guidelines. Second, the proposed development is reviewed for compliance with other regulations pertaining to floodplain, shore land, subdivision and wetland restrictions. If the proposed development complies with all State and County land development regulations, the permit can be issued.

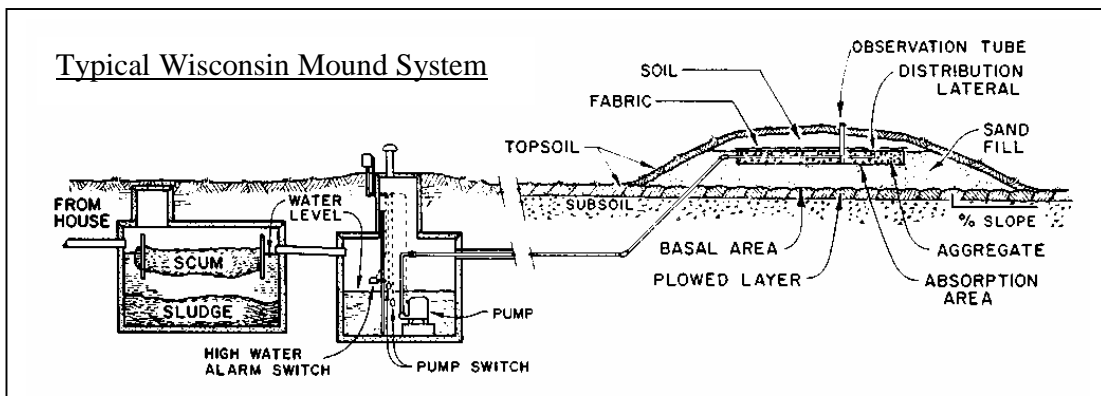
**Step Four**

**Choosing an Installer**

Only licensed plumbers can install septic systems. Before a sanitary permit can be issued, a licensed plumber must assume responsibility for the system's installation by signing an application form. A list of licensed plumbers who are active in Wood County are included with this pamphlet for your convenience. The list does not contain all those qualified to do the work. You may contract with any plumber licensed by the State of Wisconsin as a "Master Plumber" or "Master Plumber Restricted Sewer."

**CONSUMER COSTS.** The Wood County Planning & Zoning Office recommends obtaining and comparing detailed bids from several plumbers before signing a contract. Bids on septic systems requiring State review can be handled several ways. One way is to contact a professional engineer or designer to submit plans to the State for approval and then letting the approved plans out for bid. Another way is to bid-the-job-out based on the results of a soil test report. Ask the installer what you are getting for your money. Will the site be landscaped after the job has been completed? Does the bid include removal of excess soil, brush and trees? How neat of a job will be done? What is included and excluded from the bid?

**CONSUMER COMPLAINTS.** When you are misled or treated unfairly, you have a right to complain. Your complaints make us aware of potential problems so that we can protect other consumers from being victimized. If you have a complaint, please contact the Wisconsin Office of Consumer Protection at 1-800-362-8189.



## Step Five

### System Inspections and Maintenance Programs

**SEWAGE SYSTEM INSPECTIONS.** All septic system installations are inspected by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office for compliance with the issued sanitary permit. A plumbing inspector licensed by the State carries out sewage system inspections. The inspector's duty is to make sure that the work is completed according to the State plumbing code and conditions of the sanitary permit. Inspection requests must come from the plumber responsible for the system's installation. If the plumber asks for an inspection at least 24-hours in advance, the inspection can usually be honored at the requested time. If the requested inspection time does not fit in the inspector's schedule, the inspection is set for the following day as early as possible, but no later than 4:00 p.m. An inspection report is prepared and filed with the permit. If the system is not installed according to the permit or has been changed, a directive is issued to the plumber to provide a revised drawing showing the changes.

**IT IS A VIOLATION OF WISCONSIN LAW FOR A PLUMBER TO CHARGE A CUSTOMER FOR AN ERROR THAT WAS MADE INSTALLING A SEPTIC SYSTEM.**

**CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE.** A certificate of compliance is issued after the septic system has been inspected and verified to be installed as planned. The certificate allows the permit applicant to use the system. The document should be kept with your house records and referred to when there is a question about the structure's septic system.

### A NOTE ABOUT HOLDING TANKS...

The most expensive alternative to on-site treatment is a holding tank, which retains waste in a large, sealed tank. Periodically, these wastes are pumped out by a licensed septage hauler and transported away for treatment. Holding tanks cost less than a mound or conventional system to install, but annual pumping and hauling costs can be substantial.

#### \*\*\* CONSUMER ALERT \*\*\*

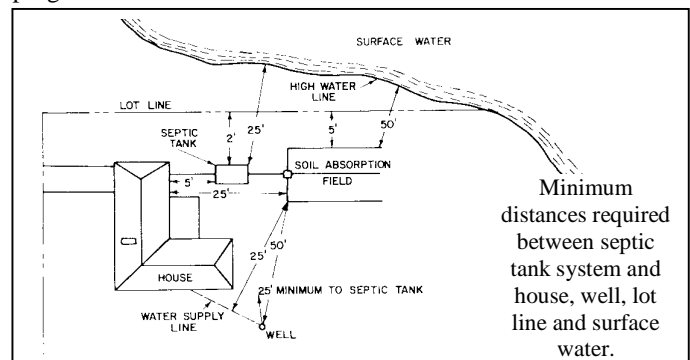
Some advertisements for septic tank additives claim to prevent clogged drains, eliminate the need for routine pumping and rescue failing systems. These ads may be promising too much and, in many cases, over exaggerate the effectiveness of the product. For more information about septic tank additives, please ask for the "Septic Tank Additives" publication.

### Other Programs You Should Know About

**BUILDING NUMBER IDENTIFICATION (BNI).** A sanitary permit is required prior to the issuance of a house number. Issuance of a house number prior to the permit may result in an incorrect house number being assigned due to

changes in the home's location. House numbers are issued by the Wood County Emergency Management Agency for all towns except Cameron and Grand Rapids. For more information, contact the Wood County Emergency Management Agency at 715-421-8500.

**RURAL HOUSING PROGRAMS.** Rural Housing, Inc., has identified different housing programs available to address the problems of Wisconsin families. In response to referrals, Rural Housing staff manages a statewide information clearinghouse to deliver program benefits to those in need. For more information about help for low-income households, please ask for the "Rural Housing Information" handout or call the Rural Housing Office at 608-238-3448 (or Toll Free 1-888-400-5974). The Wood County Planning & Zoning Office provides the Rural Housing handout as a service to County residents for financial assistance programs.



**PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE.** The following publications are available from the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office: Initial Adverse Determination, Maintaining Your Septic System, Inspecting and Troubleshooting Wisconsin Mounds, Septic Tank Additives, Bacteriological Contamination of Drinking Water, Hazardous Waste in Your Home, Diggers Hotline, Well Abandonment, Wisconsin Fund Grant Program Brochure, List of Septage haulers, List of Surveyors.

**BUILDING PERMIT.** Wisconsin law requires all municipalities to issue building permits to construct or substantially renovate permanent structures. **A COUNTY SANITARY PERMIT IS REQUIRED BEFORE THE MUNICIPALITY CAN ISSUE A BUILDING PERMIT.** A building permit is your legal permission to begin construction. It means that the municipality has approved plans for any new structure, addition or renovation and that the plans comply with the local land use plan or other local regulations. For more information about your municipality's building permit program, contact the Town Chairman.

**WHY ARE BUILDING PERMITS NECESSARY?** Through the use of building permits, a municipality can regulate the types of construction in the community and ensure that proper building standards are met. The building permit process protects the individual's interests as well as those of the community-at-large, helps prevent incompatible land developments and is used to assure equality in taxation.