



## *Florida Onsite Wastewater Association, Inc.*

### **Florida Onsite Treatment and Disposal System Evaluation Program Guide** (Information from the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Onsite Sewage Programs)

#### **How much will it cost to get my septic tank evaluated?**

- Evaluation costs are set by the individual evaluators, but cost between \$150-\$200 for each evaluation.

#### **After my tank is evaluated, and a pump-out is required, how much will the pump-out cost?**

- Pump-out costs vary around the state and cost between \$150-\$450 depending on the size of tank, the number of tanks on the property, and the cost of proper disposal.

#### **I haven't noticed any problems with my septic tank or my drainfield. Why do I need to get a tank pump-out?**

- When a septic tank is full of solids the septic tank cannot fulfill its function of retaining solids. If the solids move into the drainfield, they will be more likely to clog the drainfield. A full tank can also lead to sewage backing up from the tank to the house or the surrounding surface areas. Often these problems go unnoticed until the system fails, and requires an expensive repair.

#### **I had my tank pumped-out last year. Does my tank need to be pumped out again?**

- If your tank has been pumped-out in the last 5 years then you are exempt from the pumping requirement, however your system must still undergo an evaluation to ensure it is working properly and not in failure.

#### **What is the average life of a septic system?**

- This depends on usage and maintenance. Some systems fail within 3-5 years while others, with the proper maintenance, function for over 30 years.

#### **What is the average cost of a septic tank repair? Does a pump-out usually solve the problem?**

- Pump-outs generally solve the initial problems when tanks back up. However, costs vary based on the repair required. Some systems may just need the drainfield replaced while others may need a complete system replacement. The amount of fill, if any, the replacement of sod and landscaping will also impact the cost.

#### **Is there evidence that the 5 year inspection program will increase the life of a septic system by 50 percent?**

- This is a scientific estimate based on reduction of drainfield failures by pumping before increased amounts of sewage material move into the drainfield.

#### **What is the cost of a new septic tank versus the cost of complying with the mandatory 5 year inspection and pump-out program over a 20 year period?**

- Over a 20 year period the evaluation program should cost the owner from \$1500 to \$2000. A complete new system averages \$5000 - \$7500, but can be over \$10,000 depending on the specific situation.

#### **Will I have to upgrade my onsite system to an advanced performance based system?**

- The new law does not require upgrade to advanced performance based systems.

(FOWA's position is to let science dictate whether or not an advanced performance based system is necessary for new construction or as a replacement system.)

#### **What if I can't afford the evaluation and pump-out?**

- The law created a grant program to assist low income households, which allows for a 1 time, 1 year extension for an onsite system evaluation.

#### **What does the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommend in regard to onsite system evaluations and pump-outs? Do any other groups/organizations recommend pump-outs every three to five years?**

- The EPA recommends an onsite system evaluation every 3 years and a pump-out from 3-5 years. The National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Organization composed of regulators, industry and manufacturers also recommends routine evaluations and pump-outs of onsite systems.

#### **How will Florida Department of Environmental Protection or EPA water quality programs be impacted by a mandatory onsite system evaluation and pump-out program?**

- State and federal water quality criterion limit the amount of bacteria allowable in lakes, streams and estuaries. Onsite systems that are not working properly contribute to both surface and ground water pollution. An evaluation and pump-out program will serve to identify areas with failing systems and the correction of those failing systems which will reduce surface and groundwater pollution.

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