



Kendall County Health Department
Environmental Health Unit
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INVESTIGATE BEFORE YOU INVEST DON'T LET YOUR DREAM HOME TURN INTO A NIGHTMARE

Rural areas and some unsewered suburban residential areas require the use of individual onsite wastewater treatment (septic systems). A septic system will serve a home satisfactorily only if it is properly designed, installed and adequately maintained. Even a good system which does not have proper care and attention may become a nuisance, health hazard, and a burdensome expense.

Lot Size

Usable, unobstructed soil area is more important than lot size (determined with the assistance of your septic designer or contractor). Slope, swales, bodies of water, trees, water wells, and size of the home all affect the area that is most suitable for the home and septic field. As a rule of thumb, the Health Department recommends 20,000 square feet of useable, unobstructed soil area to accommodate the installation of an onsite sewage disposal system and, when needed, future system expansions and/or repairs.

Soil Suitability and Percolation Tests

When designing an onsite wastewater treatment system the absorption capacity of the soil must be determined by soil investigation data (collected by a soil classifier or an Illinois licensed professional engineer) or *percolation tests (supervised or conducted by a licensed Private Sewage Disposal System Installation Contractor).

* Note of Caution: A lot could pass a percolation test and still be unsuitable for a septic system. Eighty percent of the poorly drained soils in the United States, those subject to standing water, will pass a percolation test (particularly during dry seasons). A fluctuating and seasonal high water table, soil structure, texture and amount of topsoil all have an effect on the ability of the ground to absorb and treat septic effluent the year round.

What Can I Do?

1. Obtain information from certain departments (i.e., Kendall County Health Department and the Kendall County Planning, Building & Zoning Department) before buying land. The best way is to secure an option to purchase for a period of 60 – 90 days. This will give you the opportunity to schedule an investigation of the soils, and to check with the individual departments mentioned above.
2. Once you own the lot, you must still protect your investment. The soil on your lot is a natural resource and must not be destroyed. Although soil structure can be damaged in many ways, compaction when it is wet is most critical.

The homeowner must cooperate with the general contractor and septic and water well contractors in all ways, and shall not request that the location of the house, well or septic system be altered without approval from the County's Planning, Building & Zoning, and Health Departments.

Trees in the septic field area may only live a short time after being exposed to septage wastes. Ideally, they should be removed before the septic system is installed. Check with the gas, cable TV, phone and electrical companies to be sure the lines do not pass through the septic field (Call JULIE at 800-892-0123).

3. The homeowner, builder, septic installer and well driller all must make every effort to ensure the septic system has a good chance to work properly.

The general contractor should see that the septic field area is not disturbed, even if it means fencing off the field area. The top of the foundation must be kept high enough so the plumber can bring the sewer out above the septic field area to provide drainage for tri-levels and open basements. He must ensure that all clear and surface water drainage can be routed around the septic field.

The septic contractor should not begin construction of the septic system until he is assured it will go in according to the Health Department Rules and Regulations. The septic contractor must not install a system during wet weather or leave it open during a rainstorm or snowstorm.

4. Because the septic system is shallow, excavated soil and construction traffic are prohibited on septic field areas. Landscaping (seeding and grading) should be done with small track vehicles and finished prior to use of the septic-tank system.

BASIC MINIMUM SETBACK REQUIREMENTS FOR A SEPTIC SYSTEM

1. 75' minimum setback between a seepage field or effluent discharge, and any water wells; 50' minimum setback between a septic tank or aerobic treatment plant and any water wells.
2. 25' minimum setback between a seepage field and any body of water.
3. 10' minimum setback between a seepage field and a property dwelling; 5' minimum setback between a septic tank or aerobic treatment and a property dwelling.
4. 5' from all lot lines.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Minimum slope of 2' to 4' per 100' in septic field area (but no greater than a 15% slope).
2. Well located at a higher natural elevation than the septic system.
3. The septic seepage field area must not be scraped or stripped of topsoil.
4. A 100% septic seepage field expansion area reserved and protected.
5. **Once located, it is critical that the proposed septic area be effectively protected (i.e., fenced off) to prevent irreversible damages such as soil compaction caused by construction traffic and soil stockpiling. The proposed well site must also be effectively protected (i.e., "staked off") in an effort to maintain access to said site, free from obstruction. Maintain a good working relationship and effective communication with and between your licensed septic and well contractors.**

For questions and additional information, please contact the Kendall County Health Department, Environmental Health Unit at (630) 553-9100, ext. 8026.

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