



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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On-site sewage management permitting and inspections help Public Health prevent diseases

Many diseases are transmitted in a way that few folks want to think about: through fecal contamination of food and water, largely by improper disposal of human waste. Much of the dirty work of ensuring waste is disposed of safely falls to Public Health environmental health specialists.

“Where public or community sewage treatment systems aren’t available, an approved on-site sewage management system has to be installed,” Southwest Health District Environmental Health Director Dewayne Tanner said. “Your county health department is responsible for permitting and inspecting septic tanks and other on-site sewage management systems that are not part of a public or community sewage treatment system.”

Public health oversight includes systems serving one or more buildings, mobile homes, recreational vehicles, residences and other facilities designed or used for human occupancy or congregation.

“We recommend that developers considering subdivision or mobile home park development on property without access to public or community sewage treatment systems seek a predevelopment review by your county board of health first,” Tanner said.

Before anyone can begin work on a lot or facility that will need an on-site sewage management system, whether for a single dwelling or an entire subdivision, a construction permit must be obtained from the county health department.

“It is your responsibility to provide the documentation and data we need, such as plans and specifications, draining and piping design and location, soil characteristics and the location of water supplies, other utilities and trash pits on or off the lot that help determine the location of the system,” continued Tanner.

Certified engineers, geologists and other professionals must submit the proposed designs and evaluations. “Sometimes people making improvements on the property don’t realize they will have to pay professionals’ fees when they come to us to apply for construction permits,” he said. In addition, environmental health specialists from the county health department will visit the site to examine absorption rates, groundwater, soil characteristics and similar factors.

Repairs, replacement or additions to existing systems must be permitted and inspected just like new construction.

Stringent enforcement of rules regulating on-site sewage management systems is in the community’s best interest, Tanner said.

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Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth

“Safe disposal of all wastes, human, domestic and industrial, is necessary to protect the health of the individual family and the community,” he said. “Dysentery, infectious hepatitis and various types of gastrointestinal problems are transmitted from person to person through fecal contamination of food and water. Chemical contaminants affecting people through individual drinking water supplies have been tracked to groundwater pollution, again, as the result of improper disposal of on-site sewage.”

Environmental health specialists also provide an array of other services. “Your local county health department handles rabies control, food service inspections, water quality services, tourist court inspections and disease and vector evaluations,” Tanner noted. “People are frequently surprised to learn about the extent of our programs and services.”

For more information about on-site sewage management system evaluations and permitting, contact your local county health department or go online to www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org, go to the pull-down menu at the top of the page, click on “Programs” and select Environmental Health.

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