Thurston County Onsite Sewage System Designer Program

General

Thurston County Environmental Health has identified the need to address problems with onsite sewage system designs in a more formal way than we have in the past. The problem we see is submittal of designs that are inaccurate, don’t contain all of the information required, or are otherwise ambiguous or unclear. It is our intent to work with designers and engineers to address problems with designs locally, without having to resort to a complaint to the Washington State Department of Licensing. We intend to do this by:

1) When a potential problem is identified, it will be routed to the designer program personnel (currently, John Ward or Steven Davies; supervisor is Steven Petersen) for review. The decision on whether or not to schedule a meeting with the designer/engineer to discuss the issue will be at the discretion of the designer program personnel.

2) Contacting licensed designers and engineers after a problem has been identified and requesting their presence at a meeting to discuss the issue.

3) Discuss the issues with the designer/engineer to find out their point of view and to clearly state the departments’ expectations or requirements.

4) Document the meeting in writing to the designer/engineer. The need for this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

5) Doing our best to make design requirements clear (development of a designer packet, etc.).

6) Trying to maintain an objective atmosphere through peer review of the issue at hand. To help accomplish this, the case handler who identifies the problem will not be involved in the meeting with the designer or engineer.

It is important to state that it is not our intent to unreasonably burden a designer/engineer through “nit-picking” designs and calling people in for simple design errors. We all err from time to time. This program is intended to address many of the more significant problems we have encountered.

The following pages describe how we will identify issues we think are significant enough to request a meeting, and how we will determine the significance of the problem. Again,
8) Timeliness and appropriateness of corrective action taken by the violator.

9) Financial incentives to violate requirements or to continue violation. (Does the violator or did the violator achieve a monetary benefit from the violation?)

10) Related public health or environmental actions that may be taken by other local or state agencies.

11) All other considerations as required by law or deemed relevant by the health officer.

III. Departmental Actions

Informal Actions may be employed

The health officer may instruct, direct, point out errors, or otherwise seek voluntary compliance with applicable standards without initiating formal actions. Examples of these actions may include counseling letters and memoranda of understanding or agreement. Informal actions will typically be documented. These documents will be purged from the designers’ file after two years (reference Retention & Disposition-Public Records in the Thurston County Designers packet).

A person who willingly complies with standards and requirements without further instruction will not be the subject of a formal complaint to WSDOL.

Generally, if compliance is not achieved by use of a lesser action, the health officer shall escalate the action.

Formal Actions Considered for More Serious Violations

When violations occur which are considered “significant” or “serious” (see section II of these criteria for factors considered in determining significance or severity) formal actions will typically be pursued. The action will be a formal, written, well-documented complaint to WSDOL. Written complaints will be purged from the designers’ file after 6 years (reference Retention & Disposition-Public Records).