

Sizing Septic Tanks and Dose Tanks
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Questions and Answers

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Below you will find the summary of the questions and answers (Q & A) from the live Webinar Series. For clarity and brevity, the live session of Q & A was trimmed from the original recording. Please keep in mind that this document is meant as a job aide. It does not create or confer any right for or on any person and does not operate to bind federal, state, or local food safety regulatory agencies. If you have questions concerning interpretation or application of various portions, please reach out to your Regional Specialist for assistance. Current Regional Specialist and District Supervisor maps are linked on the main BEHS INFO HUB page.

Q: Can you provide guidance on how to handle it when the manufacturer of the tank provides you specs for a proposed system? Is that something that you accept at face value, or do you get your calculator out and try to figure out the volume of those tanks on your own?

- If you're doing a final inspection can take it at face value, but if you can go out to the site and see that a tank looks small, you can use a tape measure. You know you can calculate the volume of the tank by taking the length X width X the liquid depth of that tank. That would give you cubic feet. To convert cubic feet into gallons you would just multiply whatever you get for that tank by 7.5, as there's 7.5 gallons per cubic foot of water.
- If they're telling me they're getting 1000-gallon tank and that's what required that's what I'm going to go with.
- Once you have some experience, you can tell how large a tank is depending on the manufacturer. 1000 gallon is about 8ft long and 5ft tall and about 4ft wide roughly depending on the manufacturer. So, on the final inspection you can catch if an installer is trying to get away with putting in a smaller tank.

Q: How do we avoid setting tanks too deep?

- The installers and/or engineers of the system should be visiting the site before designing these systems and accessing the location of the tank compared to where the drain field is located.
- Other times we may have to dig these tanks a little deeper because of the depth the contractor may have put the 4-in pipe from the facility to the inlet side.

Q: What is the regulation on septic tanks if the owner has 3 acres or more of land?

- In counties with a 3-acre exemption; they should still be putting in systems to state code. Since they're not pulling a permit, we can't regulate that for the individual with 3 acres or more.
- If someone calls, I will educate them about what size tank should be used based on the size of the house they are building. I will explain the scenario on why it's better to put in a larger tank than 500-gallons. Again, we cannot force them too since we will not be permitting the system.
- More and more banks are requiring septic systems to meet minimum state standards before giving loans. It is beneficial for the homeowner to meet or exceed the state minimum if they ever wish to sell this house. Otherwise, when they try to sell, they could be replacing components of that system because it doesn't meet state standards.
- This exemption is for a single-family residence with not more than one home on the property. The exemption does not apply to businesses. Further, you're not exempt from permitting if you have a notice of violation for a failing system.
- We have an increased number of inspectors in our Inspector courses due to the demand of inspectors growing.

Q: What counties have that specification?

- Any state administered counties or state contract counties have the three-acre exemption.
- We're up to 58 counties in the state that are either state administered or have a participation agreement with us with the three-acre exemption.
- In ordinance counties you would need to follow the Green Book. There are multiple counties out there that are 100% permitting. Some are five acres exempt; some are 20-acre exempt. Most counties follow the state administrated exemption.

Q: Can you speak about a subsurface cluster system? I was under the impression that wasn't something we could permit.

- We can issue the permit if the system is under 3,000 gallons per day.
- If there are 7 or more connections, they need reach out to DNR about their residential housing rule.

Q: In Callaway it is required to put in a septic tank, and we explain that it is saving their systems because it is easier to pump out a tank vs a lagoon.

- By state law we cannot require a tank to be in front of a lagoon, but we can educate and explain the benefit. That's why we give a up to a 20% reduction in total surface area at the 3-foot operating depth for those permitted systems.