

ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SANITARY MAINTENANCE FEE

1. **Why is the fee being charged?**

In September 2008, the State (Department of Commerce) modified the plumbing code to include a requirement that all counties develop and implement a comprehensive septic and holding tank maintenance program. At minimum, the counties are required to do the following:

1. Complete and maintain an inventory of all holding tank and septic tanks located in the county;
2. Notify owners and service providers of the required state septic system maintenance requirements;
3. Notify owners that are delinquent in submitting maintenance reports and enforce compliance;
4. Provide annual reports to the state summarizing the results of the maintenance program.

The state did not appropriate any funds to support this new code requirement and therefore, the counties are responsible to provide the funding for this program. The fee was established by the County Board of Supervisors to help the county recover most of the costs associated with operating this maintenance program.

2. **What is the purpose of the State Law?**

The purpose of proper septic system maintenance is to protect the health and safety of State residents and to protect the ground and surface waters of the State. Proper inspection and maintenance of a septic system is important to make sure that the wastewater or effluent from the septic system is being treated properly and to identify septic systems when they are not functioning correctly. When a failing septic system contaminates surface or drinking water, it can affect many more people than just the owner of the septic system. A properly maintained system may also prolong the life expectancy of the septic system and can reduce the need for costly repairs and replacement that are more likely if the system isn't maintained properly.

3. **How do I know that this is not a scam?**

Dodge County residents will be notified by mail by the Dodge County Land Resources and Parks Department when it is time to have their system maintenance completed. If you receive a bill or invoice to pay a County maintenance fee from anyone other than the Dodge County Land Resources and Parks Department please contact our office before paying the bill. If you have any questions or comments regarding the new maintenance program and fee requirements, please feel free to contact the Land Resources and Parks Department at (920) 386-3703 or at landresources@co.dodge.wi.us.

4. **Who decided to charge this fee?**

The Dodge County Board of Supervisors, on the recommendation of the Planning, Development and Parks Committee and the County Land Resources and Parks Department, amended the Dodge County Fee Schedule Ordinance in September, 2008. Please keep in mind that monitoring of the septic and holding tank maintenance is required by law and is not optional and the State failed to appropriate any money to the Counties to fund this new maintenance requirement. The County Board Supervisors created the maintenance fee to cover most of the costs for the County to meet the new State regulations.

5. What is the money being used for?

Since 1980, new septic systems have been required to report to the County when their system was serviced. There are approximately 5500 septic and holding tank systems currently in this program. Thus far, the cost of the maintenance program has been paid for with general taxes by everyone in the County. Based on the initial inventory completed by the department, there are approximately 11,500 septic and holding tank systems located in the County, of which approximately 11,200 will now be required to be serviced at least once every 3 years. This is more than double what has been handled to date. The maintenance fee will be used to:

1. Complete and maintain an inventory of all holding tank and septic tanks located in the county;
2. Set up a procedure to phase in all septic systems installed prior to 1980 that are now required to be inspected and pumped at least once every three years;
3. Notify owners and service providers of the required state septic system maintenance requirements;
4. Track every inspection, maintenance and/or servicing event for every septic and holding tank system located in the county;
5. Follow up with property owners that are delinquent in submitting maintenance reports and enforce compliance;
6. Provide annual reports to the state summarizing the results of the maintenance program.

6. I have a mound system, not a septic system; or I have a conventional system not a septic system.

Regardless of what type of system is installed on your property, it is a septic system. The only properties not having septic systems are those that are connected to public sewer systems, or those buildings that do not have plumbing in them, such as barns and sheds.

7. What happens if I don't pay the maintenance fee?

If the maintenance fee is not paid or the septic system is not maintained in accord with the code requirements, the department will initiate the appropriate legal action that is necessary to correct the violation. Any person, firm, or corporation, who fails to comply with the provisions of the Code, shall upon conviction thereof, forfeit not less than \$50.00 nor more than \$500.00 and cost of prosecution for each violation. Each day a violation exists is considered a separate violation.

8. I had my system pumped out within the last two years, do I need to have it pumped out and inspected again?

If you can provide our office with documentation that your system was pumped or serviced within the last two years, it is not necessary to have it pumped at this time. Please attach a copy of your receipt listing date that the system was serviced and listing the company that serviced your system to the septic maintenance letter that you received from our department. Our office will update the records to show the date that the system was last serviced and we will notify you 3 years from the date of service that it is time to have your system serviced. Payment of the \$15.00 maintenance fee is still required if the system was pumped after January 1, 2009.

9. Why did I receive two letters?

Every property that contains a residence that is connected to a septic system will receive a letter over the next three years. If you own more than 1 home, you will receive a letter for each home. The certification letter contains a "Site Address" which lists the site address of the septic system that needs to be serviced.

10. Can I wait until fall to have the system pumped or does it need to be done in 90-days?

Yes, please send the letter back to our office with a request to have your system pumped in the fall. We will change our records and re-send out a new letter later this summer.

11. I am connected to public sewer.

If you are connected up to public sewer, please call our office and let us know that your home is connected to public sewer so that we can correct our records.

12. I don't have a home or septic system on this lot but I still received a letter.

If your lot is a vacant lot or has buildings located on it but no residence and no plumbing, we ask that you please contact our office to let us know what the situation is so that we can correct our records. Please have your Parcel Identification Number (PIN) that is shown on the letter with you when you call so that we can use it to identify your property.