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Draft Sewage Treatment System (STS) Rules – Key Facts

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History

- State minimum rules for sewage treatment system construction and operation were adopted in 1977. Local health districts were able to adopt more stringent rules. Chapter 3718 establishing authority for state law and rules was adopted in 2005. Portions of the state law were suspended in 2007. Sub. S.B. 110 (128th General Assembly effective 9-17-2010) changed ORC Chapter 3718 governing sewage treatment systems including both household and small flow (<1,000 gpd) systems. ODH is required to adopt new rules after January 1, 2012.

Inclusive and transparent rule adoption process

- ODH convened a rule advisory committee in October, 2010 representing 43 organizations including local health districts, product manufacturers, system installers, service providers, septage haulers, local and state government, homebuilders, realtors, townships, county commissioners, and engineers. The committee met monthly from December 2010 through October 2012 with discussions on related rule topics at each meeting.
- Rule advisory committee meetings were open, served over the internet, and most were audio recorded. Resource materials, notes of committee decisions, and comments were captured and posted on a department website.
- Rule drafts were prepared based on committee discussions. Groups of draft rules were posted on the ODH website in February, 2012; August, 2012, October, 2012 and early December, 2012 allowing an extended review period for most proposed rules.
- The first compiled draft of rules was posted for comment from December 20, 2012 through March 1, 2013. ODH conducted 11 regional meetings in January/February, 2013 to discuss the draft rules and obtain comment.
- ODH will revise the first draft based on comments and submit a second draft for the 60 day review process in May, 2013. An additional period for public comment will occur during this time. ODH is proposing an effective date for the rules of January 1, 2014.

Key Draft Sewage Rule Facts

- The rules do not require that all systems must be upgraded. The rules establish new standards for system construction, alteration and maintenance when a system fails or breaks and must be altered or replaced, or a when new system is installed.
- All existing systems are deemed approved under state law until they fail and cannot be repaired.
- The goal of the draft rules is to update the current 1977 rules to provide a wide range of sewage system choices and technologies for new or replacement sewage systems that provide safe and sustainable treatment in the diverse soils and geology of the state. This promotes healthy communities and safe development in suburban and rural areas not served by public sewers.
- The draft rules carefully balance the protection of public health and safety from sewage related diseases with system cost using basic, proven designs in addition to new, innovative technologies.
- Good design options for systems help protect the financial investment of the homeowner and proper system maintenance ensures systems are sustainable for many years.
- Lower cost, low maintenance systems such as septic tanks to leaching trenches that use the natural soils for treatment are the preferred design and will continue to be the primary system installed in Ohio. New technologies are available for use where the soils present greater challenges for sewage treatment.
- The draft rules combine state standards with options for local flexibility. For example, local health districts can establish a local vertical separation distance between 6 and 18 inches to the seasonal water table, representing the most common limiting condition for soils in the state. This approach will help lower system costs where local conditions can allow more basic system designs.
- The sewage treatment system draft rules (Ohio Administrative Code 3701-29) can be accessed on the ODH website at: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/rules/drafts/drafts.aspx>.