

Frequently Asked Questions

Onsite Sewage System Maintenance Bylaw 3479

1. Why did North Saanich join Onsite Sewage System Maintenance Bylaw 3479?

The District of North Saanich voted in favour of joining the Capital Regional District (CRD) onsite service at the September 25, 2023 regular council meeting. Septic systems are intended to be a long-term wastewater solution in many areas of the region. Several municipalities have taken steps to ensure the systems in their community are maintained at regular intervals to protect the natural environment. **Improperly maintained septic systems contribute to marine water and stormwater runoff contamination in North Saanich.** Current and historical data indicate elevated fecal bacteria from human sources entering marine waters and high bacteria concentrations in some upstream ditches. In some cases, sources have been traced to properties with malfunctioning septic systems.

2. What are the issues around malfunctioning septic systems?

When septic systems malfunction, untreated or partially treated wastewater can be exposed. Untreated wastewater carries dangerous viruses and pathogens that can result in illness and pollution in our community. Malfunctioning septic systems may cause contamination of groundwater, local streams, rivers and lakes, as well as contamination of shellfish beds and nutrient enrichment of sensitive water bodies.

3. Why did the CRD implement Onsite Sewage System Maintenance Bylaw 3479?

The CRD, in cooperation with participating municipalities, implemented Bylaw 3479 in response to sewerage system regulations introduced by the provincial government in 2005. Under provincial regulations, septic system owners are required to maintain their system at regular intervals. This bylaw helps ensure regular maintenance of septic systems occurs to prevent the environmental degradation from poorly maintained systems and to ensure systems function well for the long-term. Learn more about the bylaw at: www.crd.bc.ca/education/stormwater-wastewater-septic/at-home/protecting-septic-system/septic-and-regulations-bylaw

4. What are the cost impacts of Bylaw 3479?

Annually, the cost to administer Bylaw 3479 is approximately \$18 per parcel connected to a septic system. This cost will be collected by North Saanich as part of the property taxation process.

5. What are the different types of septic systems?

Under provincial regulations there are three types of systems, each with different maintenance requirements.

- **Type 1:** Treatment by a septic tank and dispersal field only (either gravity fed or pumped)
- **Type 2:** Treatment that produces a higher quality effluent, often a package treatment plant
- **Type 3:** Treatment that produces an even higher quality effluent, often a package treatment plant with additional treatment such as ultraviolet disinfection.

6. What are Bylaw 3479 requirements for Type 1 systems?

Owners of Type 1 systems are required to pump out their septic tank every five years. For example, a pump out on February 1, 2025 is required to pump again by February 1, 2030. Homeowners will be notified of their last pump out date. **If you do not have a record of your last pump out, you are required to pump out by March 31, 2027.**

Five years is intended to be a maximum time frame; many systems require more frequent pumping depending on the size of the tank and the activities in your home (i.e., every 2-5 years). The septage receiving facility will notify the CRD of your pump out; however, owners are advised to keep their receipts as proof of service. This pump out requirement is a minimum amount of maintenance. For owners under the bylaw who wish to be proactive with their maintenance and develop a custom maintenance plan, an inspection cost share program is available.

7. What are Bylaw 3479 requirements for Type 2 and Type 3 systems?

Owners of Type 2 or Type 3 systems are required to have their system maintained by an **Authorized Person** at least once per calendar year beginning in 2026. They are also required to follow the maintenance plan for the system, which may require more frequent maintenance. A CRD *Certification of Maintenance* form must be completed by an Authorized Person and submitted to the CRD annually. A copy of this form must also be retained by owners and be available to the CRD upon request. Many service providers will submit these forms to the CRD on the owner's behalf.

8. Who can do work on a septic system?

The Provincial Sewerage System Regulation allows only **Authorized Persons** to design, plan, construct or do maintenance work on an onsite sewage system in BC. An **Authorized Person is defined as a Professional Engineer or Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner (ROWP)** with education or experience in onsite sewage system construction and maintenance. The Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC (ASTTBC) is the provincial registering body for ROWPs. To find a qualified ROWP in your area, please visit their website at:

<https://asttbc.org/registrants/registered-technical-specialist/>

Under the Provincial Regulation, construction or maintenance of a Type 3 system must be under the supervision of a Professional. The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (APEGBC) maintains a list of Professionals at: www.egbc.ca/Member-Directories/Professionals-for-Sewerage-System-Regulation

9. What are the costs of septic maintenance?

Industry costs on Vancouver Island are estimated below:

- **Pumping a septic tank:** \$400 - \$1,200, 600 – 1000 gallon tank
- **Inspection:** \$700 - \$1,200, based on hourly rate in field / report writing
- **Maintenance:** \$300 - \$750, based on accessibility and complexity of system
 - \$300 for simple gravity system with good access provisions
 - \$450 for pressurized systems with good access
 - \$650 for type 2 systems which require lab sampling of effluent quality
 - \$750 for type 3 systems which also require involvement by a professional

To contact the CRD about septic systems, email septic@crd.bc.ca or call 250.360.3187.

To report a malfunctioning septic system or for installation plans and drawings contact Island Health at 250.519.3401 or email gateway_office@islandhealth.ca.

To learn more about the Provincial Sewerage System Regulation, visit:

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/sewage/onsite-sewage-systems

Capital Regional District

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