

Buying a Home or Business? Questions You Should Ask On Sewage Disposal

When purchasing a home or business it is important to inquire about the sewage disposal system on the property. The following are suggested questions to ask the owner before you buy.

- What type of sewage disposal system serves the property, a municipal sewer system or a septic system? (If there is running water in the structure, it must have one or the other.) Note: If the property is served by a municipal sewer system, you usually don't need to inquire further.
- Is the lot part of a state approved subdivision? If so, try to get the subdivision approval number. If the lot was created prior to 1967, there will be no state approval for the subdivision since the state approval program was not implemented until July 1, 1967. This may affect the marketability and development potential of a lot. For previously developed lots, it may prohibit further expansion or conversion.
- Has the septic system received both state approvals for construction and operation? If so, does the owner have a copy of the approved plans, or the construction approval and approval for operation numbers? **Please note:** If the lot has questionable characteristics such as ledge outcrops or steep slopes, it is strongly advised to have a site assessment performed by a permitted septic system designer.
- Does the number of bedrooms on the approval match the number of bedrooms in the house? (There is no problem if there is less than the approved number of bedrooms.)
- Where the system located is, in particular, where is the tank clean-out located?
- How old is the septic system?
- When was the last time the tank was pumped? (This becomes particularly important if a garbage disposal has been used.)
- Do you have a maintenance record for the system? (While a maintenance record is not required, it is a good idea to get one if possible.)
- Has the system ever failed, or are there signs of failure like soggy grass or odor?
- What type of water supply serves the structure, municipal water supply or well?
- If there is a well, where is it located?
- Is the well a dug well or a drilled well?
- Is the well properly sealed?
- Has the well water ever been tested? If so, when? What were the results?
- Has the well ever been disinfected? If so, when?

For Further Information

If you have any questions concerning septic systems, contact NHDES Subsurface at (603) 271-3501, or 29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; Fax: (603) 271-6683.