



# ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM (OWTS)

## Permit Application Process

The onsite wastewater treatment system (OWTS) permit process helps to protect the public's health and our water resources by ensuring that household wastewater is effectively treated.

**Please note** that OWTS applications and permits are separate and distinct from the permits required by the Boulder County Land Use Department; other reviews and approvals may be required, per Boulder County Land Use Code or Boulder County Road Standards and Specifications.

Compliance of current uses and the status of the existing development will be verified with the Boulder County Land Use Department during the OWTS permitting process. In the event that unpermitted construction, non-conforming uses, or other land use issues are identified, the OWTS permit process may be delayed.

### APPLICATION, TESTING, AND EXCAVATION

For a smooth and efficient permitting process, follow these steps:

1. Obtain a permit application, list of registered professional engineers, and list of licensed installers from Boulder County Public Health (BCPH) at [www.SepticSmart.org](http://www.SepticSmart.org) or in-person at 3450 Broadway, Boulder (lower level).
2. Schedule a detailed soil analysis with a registered professional engineer or professional geologist of your choice. **Soil analysis must meet criteria outlined in current BCPH OWTS regulations.**
3. Schedule a contractor to dig the required number of eight-foot-deep profile test pit excavations.
4. Locate and clearly mark your property's water lines and soil test holes.
5. Submit the following items, **in-person**, to BCPH (**applications are not accepted by mail**):
  - a. Completed permit application, along with:
    - 1) Accurate directions to the site.
    - 2) A plot plan of the property that includes the location of the house, well, and OWTS components (i.e. "see attached" is not satisfactory and will not be accepted).  
**The application will not be accepted without the above information.**
  - b. Results of soil investigation and OWTS design (if applicable) with **original stamp and signature of engineer (or geologist)**.
  - c. Permit fee (payable by cash, check, credit card, or money order; checks should be made payable to "Boulder County Public Health").

### Detailed Soil Analysis

Visual and tactile evaluation of two (or more) soil profile test pit excavations **OR** one set of 3 percolation tests plus at least one soil profile test pit excavation is required. If no percolation test is conducted, at least two soil profile test pit excavations must be performed in the proposed soil treatment area, one of which must be located in the area anticipated to have the most limiting conditions. The test pit excavation must:

- Be at least four feet below the proposed depth of the infiltrative surface (bottom of chambers or gravel layer).
- Establish soil types, structure shape and grade (per Table 10-1), restrictive layers, seasonal high groundwater, and bedrock level.
- Determine the best depth for the infiltrative surface.
- **Be dug at least 24 hours prior to the site inspection by BCPH** (it can be covered with boards or gated off to prevent injury to children or animals).
- Be marked or flagged so it can be easily located during the site inspection.
- Free of snow or fill material to the depth of the hole. **Boreholes are not acceptable.**

### Percolation Test

If used, Percolation tests (aka "percs") must be done by or under the direct supervision of a registered professional engineer or by a professional geologist. Test results must be submitted, including perc data sheets, with the application, prior to the site inspection. Perc test holes must be marked or flagged so they can be easily located during the site inspection. **Do not fill in perc test or profile holes before BCPH has conducted its site inspection!**

## Property and Water Lines

Property owners/applicants using public water supplies must identify the location of the waterline from the house to the street and any other waterlines within 25 feet of the proposed absorption field. Property owners using private water supplies, such as a well or cistern, must identify the waterline from the house. All property owners must identify property line boundaries using stakes, flags, or spray paint.

## SITE INSPECTION

Staff will schedule a site inspection after the application, soil investigation information, and fees are received and the existence of the test pit excavation has been verified. The site must be accessible for inspection, and directions to the property must be clear and accurate on the application. If the directions are incomplete and/or the property or soil test holes cannot be found, a re-inspection fee will be charged for additional evaluation.

The access roads to the site must be free of snow and accessible with a 4-wheel drive vehicle. If it is not, that must be noted in the directions. If the property becomes inaccessible due to a snowstorm, please call BCPH as soon as possible to reschedule the inspection. Keep dogs away from the areas to be evaluated. Notify BCPH at time of application submittal if a gate code is required to access the property. If BCPH is unable to gain access to the property or the area of the OWTS due to dogs, locked gates, or electrical fences, a re-inspection fee will be charged for an additional evaluation.

Requests for open-hole inspections, if required, and final inspections, are to be requested by the installer. Inspections will be scheduled on the next available day, and notification indicating approval or denial will be left on the premises.

## PERMIT APPROVAL

Following the site inspection, the permit will be issued **IF** all OWTS regulations are met. The process for issuing an OWTS permit can take up to 30 business days from the time BCPH receives the application, fee, soil investigation information that meets regulations, and OWTS design (if applicable) that meets regulations.

You will be notified by phone or e-mail when your permit is ready. When you submit your application, please let BCPH know if you would prefer to pick up your permit or have it sent to you via email or U.S. mail.

## Non-Standard Systems

If a conventional standard system on the property cannot conform to the Boulder County OWTS regulations, an engineer will need to design a system that will meet the regulations. All engineer designs must have an **original stamp, signature, and legal description** on all designs presented to BCPH.

**Please Note:** Not all sites are acceptable for OWTS installations, and an engineer's design does not ensure approval. Some systems also require approval by the Boulder County Board of Health.

Some permits may require the filing of notarized legal documents, such as an easement & maintenance agreement. You will be notified if any such documents are required. The documents must be submitted prior to issuance of the permit.