



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Tuscarawas County  
Health Department

## Home Sewage Treatment System (HSTS)/Septic Operation & Maintenance (O&M) Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **What is the Operation & Maintenance (O&M) Program, and why do I need an Operation Permit?**

The O&M Program is a state-wide initiative to ensure proper maintenance of Home Sewage Treatment Systems (HSTSs) to protect public health, minimize pollution of Ohio waters, and extend the lifetime of private sewage systems. Operation permits are required for all private sewage treatment systems by the Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3701-29. Permits also provide homeowners with education on system maintenance.

### **When did TCHD's program start? How are systems being enrolled, and what is the timeline?**

In January 2023, enrollment of systems with a mechanical (aerator) or discharging component was initiated. Enrollment for all other system types will take place in 2024 (tank to leach lines, dry well, etc.).

### **What are the requirements for my Home Sewage Treatment System (HSTS)?**

The maintenance & documentation requirements for your HSTS can be found in your Operation Permit and are determined by system design. Compliance with permit conditions is judged based on submission of service contracts, service reports, and/or pump reports by Tuscarawas County registered service providers and pumpers. Operation permits are different from service contracts. If you have an STS that requires a service contract, that must be obtained from a registered service provider.

### **How do I find out what type of HSTS I have?**

A copy of your HSTS records can be requested by calling (330) 343-5550 or emailing [eh@tchdnow.org](mailto:eh@tchdnow.org).

### **What will be the costs to property owners with the O&M program?**

Systems with a mechanical (aerator) or discharging component will have a 2-year "renewable" operation permit with a cost of \$30.00. Non-mechanical or non-discharging systems will have a 5-year "renewable" operation permit with a cost of \$50.00.

### **What does "renewable" mean?**

Renewable means that operation permits will have expiration limits. This will require reapplying for and purchasing a new permit before it officially expires.

### **Is there a penalty if I don't pay?**

Failure to pay for an operation permit will result in an additional 25% penalty fee. Unpaid fees may be added to the property owner's taxes.

### **What are the fees used for?**

The money generated from the O&M program will pay for the materials used for mailings, postage for mailings, and personnel costs for administering the program. Personnel costs include preparing mailings, maintaining the database, reviewing service reports, following up on non-compliance & system

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performance issues, providing homeowner education, and conducting quality control of registered service providers.

**Will I have to update my old HSTS if it no longer meets current installation code requirements?**

No. Systems will not be “failed” based solely on age, but instead evaluated on performance. Ohio law allows HSTSs in operation prior to 2015 to be deemed approved if they are not causing a public health nuisance.

**Will I have to replace my HSTS if it is found to be creating a public health nuisance?**

Not necessarily. If the nuisance situation can be eliminated by approved repairs, then the system will be deemed compliant. If repairs are not possible, TCHD will review replacement options with homeowners.

**Who can perform the required maintenance on my HSTS?**

Any registered service provider certified to service your type of HSTS can perform the required maintenance. A list of service providers can be found at: <https://www.tchdnow.org/operation-and-maintenance-program.html>

**Do I have to use a registered service provider?**

Some HSTSs require that a registered service provider perform the required maintenance while other systems may only require proof of pumping from a registered septage hauler. In some cases, for systems that were installed prior to 2007, homeowners may even become certified and provide their own maintenance.

**Who submits the proof of required maintenance? How soon must reports be submitted?**

A registered service provider or septage hauler must submit proof of service within 30 days of service.

**What happens if I don't do the required maintenance?**

Not completing required maintenance may shorten the life expectancy of your system. A Non-Compliance inspection may be performed by TCHD on a pass/fail basis for an additional fee. If the system fails inspection, you may be required to repair/replace your HSTS.

**Is there any help for homeowners who cannot afford to replace their HSTS?**

TCHD is always in search of grants and low-interest loans for low-income families to replace their HSTSs. For 2022, TCHD has been awarded \$150,000 in funding from Ohio EPA Water Pollution Control Loan Fund to assist low-income-eligible homeowners with the repair/replacement of failing septic systems.

**Do operation permits transfer ownership upon sale of a home?**

Yes. Once a system is enrolled into the program, the Operation Permit issued will remain associated with the system and will transfer automatically to the new owner upon sale. Sellers are responsible for disclosing details of the operation permit terms & conditions to buyers.

**I received a permit letter, but my neighbor/friend/relative did not. Why?**

TCHD currently has records for over 8,500 home sewage treatment systems in Tuscarawas County. We understand there are many more systems than that. Unfortunately, many of our records contain addresses that are no longer in use, utilize intersections or areas as reference for new builds instead of parcel numbers or addresses, or have been installed prior to needing permits or without a valid permit. TCHD plans to continue to enroll systems into the program as we are made aware of them through nuisance complaints, point of sale transfers, or repairs and replacements. Additionally, systems with

mechanical and/or discharging components will be phased into the program 1 year ahead of all traditional systems due to different permit durations and requirements.

**Who should I contact if I do not agree with this program or would like to issue a complaint?**

This program is a State-wide program and governed under the Ohio Administrative Code. If you have concerns or wish to express your frustration with this program, we encourage you to reach out to your elected officials at the State level.

**I have questions about my Home Sewage Treatment System (HSTS). Who should I call?**

Call Tuscarawas County Health Department Bureau of Environmental Health Services at (330) 343-5550.