

JEFFERSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

FAQ FOR REMODELING PROJECTS – MARCH 2004

NOTE:

This FAQ concerns obtaining Health Department inspections related to remodeling a dwelling or nonresidential structure. Please see [the FAQ for HOME SALES](#) regarding the requirements for SELLING existing structures.

You may click on the documents shown in blue to be taken to the document

1. What is the County's inspection program?

Prior to the issuance of a permit to remodel a dwelling served by an individual sewage disposal system, the owner is required have the system inspected and approved. There are two types of inspections – "Use Permit" inspections for the major remodeling projects that would increase the potential occupancy of the dwelling (typically through adding bedrooms) and "Verification of Water and Sewer Facilities" inspections for lesser projects. Maintenance and repair projects do not typically require a health department permit.

2. Why did the County adopt this program?

The Board of Health was concerned that individual sewage disposal systems were not always being inspected during remodeling and that failing or marginal systems were not being properly repaired. Therefore, the requirement for a pre-remodeling inspection for individual sewage disposal systems was made a part of the July 4, 2003 regulation revision (Part IX).

3. Do all remodeling projects require a use permit?

No – the following list of typical remodeling projects sets forth the corresponding health inspections and permits required, if any.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT INSPECTIONS ARE NOT REQUIRED FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS:

- *Building a deck, porch or patio*
- *Building a storage shed*
- *Building a garage* (without restroom facilities or piped-in water)
- *Building a barn* (without restroom facilities or piped-in water)
- *Building a studio or office* (without restroom facilities or piped-in water)
- *Roof replacement / repair*
- *Any other routine maintenance or repair project*
- *Any other structure that has no restroom facilities or fixtures or water piped into the structure*

A VERIFICATION OF WATER AND SEWER FACILITIES INSPECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS:

- *Adding a bathroom anywhere in structure*
- *Adding a den, office, sewing room, laundry or other non-occupied room*
- *Building a barn (with restroom or piped-in water)*
- *Building a garage (with restroom or piped-in water)*
- *Building a studio or office (with restroom or piped-in water)*
- *Combining two bedrooms into one then adding another bedroom (no net increase in total number of bedrooms)*
- *Enlarging any existing room*
- *Finishing a basement (no bedrooms)*
- *Remodeling a kitchen or bathroom*
- *Adding space to a nonresidential or commercial structure that would not increase the potential occupancy of the structure.*

A USE PERMIT IS REQUIRED FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS:

- *Adding a bathroom to a dwelling or structure that has never had one*
- *Adding a bedroom or sleeping room anywhere in structure such that the net number of such rooms in the dwelling is increased*
- *Adding a garage with an apartment such that the net number of bedrooms or sleeping rooms in the dwelling is increased*
- *Any other work that would increase potential occupancy of the dwelling or structure*

4. So how do I proceed?

First, check the above list to determine what kind of permit (if any) you need. Then, you file the necessary application and reports to obtain that permit.

5. What is a “Verification of Water and Sewer Facilities” inspection?

This basic inspection verifies that your property already has minimum sanitary facilities (toilet, bathroom sink, tub or shower and kitchen sink) and that they are connected to operational water and sewage disposal facilities.

6. How do I get this Inspection?

*Fill out **FORM 1000** and submit it with the \$75.00 fee. No septic tank pumping is required. A staff member will contact you to arrange to visit the site, inspect the well and individual sewage disposal system and verify that you have the required plumbing fixtures. If the system passes inspection, you will be given an approval form at the close of the inspection.*

7. What is a Use Permit?

This is a more detailed inspection of the existing individual sewage disposal system that is required when the potential occupancy of the dwelling is increased through adding a bedroom (or increasing occupancy in a non-residential structure).

8. How do I get one?

Before applying for a Use Permit, you should contact the Department (303 271-5755) to determine if your existing individual sewage disposal system is sized to accommodate the potential additional wastewater load. If it is, you the obtain the services of a certified inspector to perform an inspection of the individual sewage disposal system. In addition, they will need to contact a company to have the septic tank pumped and inspected.

9. How do I know if an Inspector is Certified or Licensed?

See [LIST OF INSPECTORS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY](#).

10. What do the inspectors look for?

The inspection will cover a number of aspects that relate to both the structural integrity of all systems components, site conditions, and operational status of the system. Very basically, to be approved an individual sewage disposal system must have:

- *some kind of primary treatment unit (septic tank) in good repair and functional,*
- *some kind of absorption or evaporation system in good repair and functional (unless the system is a non-discharging vault),*
- *a maintenance contract for any mechanical systems and*
- *most importantly, the existing individual sewage disposal system must have sufficient treatment capacity for the proposed additional wastewater flow.*

11. How much will these inspections cost?

Each inspector sets their own fees. We estimate that it will take about 1 hour to perform the work (not including the tank pumping). Since all inspectors must use the same forms and criteria, be sure to compare prices as well.

12. Once I have the inspection report forms, what is the next step?

You will need to fill out [FORM 700](#) and submit all the inspection reports and the \$75.00 application fee to the Department, either in person or by mail.

13. What will the Department do prior to issuing the use permit?

The Department will:

- *review the submitted inspection reports,*
- *check the records to determine if we have information on the size, capacity and components of the system,*
- *check the records to determine if there are past or current reported problems with the system, and*
- *issue the permit with the appropriate conditions.*

14. What information will you report from the original installation file?

If available, we will report the original design parameters of the system in terms of number of bedrooms and persons the system was designed for and the total treatment capacity in gallons per day. We will also report the date of installation, permit and file numbers, if any.

15. How long will it take to issue a use permit?

Initially, it may take up to 10 working days, although we hope to process the majority of permits within 5 working days.

16. How long will use permits be valid?

The permit is valid until the date of application for a building permit, or six months have elapsed, whichever comes first.

17. Can I renew a use permit?

Since the permit is valid for 6 months, there should be no need to renew them. However, if it becomes apparent that this is a problem, the Department will develop a policy for renewals.

18. Suppose I want to add a 4th bedroom to my house but the original installation permit was only for a 3 bedroom?

Since the existing system is not adequately sized for the additional potential wastewater flow, you cannot add the additional bedroom to the dwelling.

19. What must I do then?

You will need to increase the capacity of the existing system, either by adding on to the existing system or by constructing a second system. A design from an engineer will be required, along with an installation permit from the Department.

20. What has to be added on?

Generally, both the capacity of the tank and the absorption field must be increased, but your engineer will determine the exact requirements.

21. Are there any types of systems that cannot be approved for a use permit?

Certain systems will not qualify, such as:

- *systems that have an inspection report with a FAIL item marked,*
- *systems that do not have a septic tank or primary treatment unit (cesspools),*
- *“straight pipes” discharging sewage with no treatment, and*
- *systems that are currently under investigation by the Department as a reported malfunction.*

22. What must be done in those cases?

The system must be permitted, repaired and upgraded to meet the current minimum standards as provided for in the individual sewage disposal system regulations.

23. Must this repair work be done before the remodeling project commences?

No, but you must obtain the repair permit before getting a building permit. The work on the individual sewage disposal system must be completed prior to the final construction inspection on the remodeling project.

24. What is my dwelling has a pit-privy or outhouse?

Dwellings with pit privies cannot be occupied full-time and major additions cannot be approved. Only safety and maintenance projects can be undertaken unless the dwelling is upgraded with an individual sewage disposal system and a source of potable water.

25. Does a use permit inspection include wells or other water sources?

The use permit is specifically limited to the individual sewage disposal system. Wells are not subject to these requirements. However, the Department recommends that the capacity of the well and the quality of the water be checked to make sure that the well is an adequate and safe source of water.

26. What is the penalty for not obtaining a Use Permit?

Failure to obtain a use permit may subject the owner of the property to a penalty as assessed under the provisions of Colorado State Law.

27. Who can I contact for additional information on use permits?

Craig Sanders, Jefferson County Department of Health and Environment will be happy to answer your questions at (303) 271-5759 or email at csanders@jeffco.us.