

## Frequently Asked Questions

# TRANSFER OF LARGE ON-SITE SEWAGE SYSTEMS

(14,500 – 100,000 gallons per day)

From Department of **ECOLOGY** to Department of **HEALTH**

July 2011



### What is a Large On-Site Sewage System (LOSS)?

"Large on-site sewage system" is a system of components, located on or nearby the property it serves, that

- Treats domestic sewage only.
- Has subsurface treatment and disposal of the effluent, such as through a drainfield.
- Has a design flow between 3,500 and 100,000 gallons per day (gpd).

It does NOT include:

- A holding tank that discharges to a public sewer.
- A system into which stormwater or industrial wastewater is discharged.

### Why is this change happening?

In 2007, the legislature directed the Department of Health (DOH) to expand its oversight of LOSS to those that have design flows between 14,500 and 100,000 gpd. These large LOSS were previously permitted by Department of Ecology. It also directed DOH to protect the environment in addition to public health. (Chapter 70.118B RCW)

### When does it take effect?

All LOSS in Washington must have a DOH operating permit starting July 1, 2009. However, Ecology-permitted systems will transfer to DOH when their existing permit expires. Some will not transfer until 2013.

### If I have a large LOSS, what changes will I see under DOH regulation?

- You will submit required reports to DOH.
- Projects to design new LOSS or repair or expand existing LOSS will be reviewed and approved by DOH engineers.
- DOH permits must be renewed annually. Your permit application and permit fees must be sent to DOH each year.
- DOH has a different appeal and compliance process, which does not include the Pollution Control Hearings Board.

### Will my treatment system be regulated by Department of Health (DOH)?

NO, if:

- Your existing development has flow through a common point of less than 3,500 gpd for each on-site system, even if there are several on-site sewage systems serving the development.
- Your system treats or will treat more than 100,000 gpd. Ecology continues to permit systems of this size.
- Your on-site system treats wastewater from industrial sources or storm water.

YES, if:

- Any existing single on-site system has a design flow between 3,500 and 100,000 gpd.
- You are designing a new LOSS with flow between 3,500 and 100,000 gpd.
- You are treating domestic sewage only, which may include things like restaurant waste flows, if they are pre-treated to domestic strength.

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### What does DOH mean by “design flow”?

Design flow means the maximum volume of sewage that residences, structures, or other facilities are estimated to generate in a twenty-four-hour period. Included are both operating capacity and surge capacity for the system during periodic heavy use events.

### What if my treatment system discharges to a treatment wetland or infiltration basin that lets the treated water infiltrate into the ground?

You will continue under the Ecology permitting process. LOSS are defined as having subsurface disposal of the treated effluent. This is usually called a drainfield. If the effluent from your system discharges to the ground surface to infiltrate to ground water, evaporates, or discharges to surface water, then it is not a LOSS.

### What will not change?

DOH expects owners to maintain and operate their LOSS to treat wastewater and protect public health and the environment, in accordance with regulations. If you are required to employ a state-certified operator, that will not change.

### How much are DOH annual permit fees?

Annual permit fees are based on the design flow of the LOSS, and whether it is in compliance with permit conditions. Owners of compliant LOSS pay \$150 plus \$0.01 per gallon flow. Fee information is in Chapter 246-272 WAC (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=246-272>).

### What do I do if I own or operate a LOSS without a permit?

You must apply to DOH for a permit. You should expect to provide details of your system’s design and its operation and management.

### Where can I find the DOH LOSS regulation?

Chapter 246-272B WAC, <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-272B>, is the LOSS rule. A print friendly version, with table of contents, is at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/WW/WW-246-272B.pdf>.

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### For more information please contact:

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The DOH LOSS website [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/ww/loss/default.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/ww/loss/default.htm)

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