



**State of Wisconsin,
Department of Safety &
Professional Services**

Wisconsin Maintenance Program

State Statute 145 and Administrative Code SPS383 have requirements regarding the maintenance and operation of all Privately Owned Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS) or septic systems in the state of Wisconsin.

The tank is the part of the system which requires regular maintenance. You must have the tank cleaned out regularly so that sludge and scum don't build up. If you do not clean your tank when needed, sludge or scum will clog the outlet pipe or move out into the soil absorption field. This will clog the field and lead to a premature, costly failure of the system.

Most septic systems have a drainfield after the septic tank. The servicing frequency of an anaerobic treatment tank for a POWTS shall occur at least when the combined sludge and scum volume equals 1/3 of the tank volume. A

common misconception is that every three years, the tank must be pumped. That is incorrect. The code only requires that systems shall be visually inspected at least once every 3 years. However, many owners pump their tanks at that time as preventative maintenance.

Many systems also have effluent filters in the tank on the outlet to the drainfield. Filters should also be cleaned when your tank is serviced. Improperly maintained filters can damage the system or lead to back-ups into the structure.

Holding tank systems do not have a drainfield. They only hold wastewater until it can be pumped out by a liquid waste hauler. Holding tanks are serviced when the wastewater of the tank reaches a level of one foot below the inlet invert of the tank. At this level the alarm will activate to alert the owner that servicing is needed.

County Duties

Counties as state agents are obliged to inventory and operate a program to track maintenance activity on septic systems within their jurisdiction. This program is more than just recording servicing events. Counties send maintenance reminder notices to landowners and follow up on those properties that are delinquent.

Every county in Wisconsin has completed an inventory of all systems in their jurisdiction. That is over 750,000 systems state-wide! As of October 1, 2019, all POWTS must be part of a maintenance tracking program. Counties will send notices to owners when their system is due for maintenance.

Landowner Responsibilities

As an owner of a POWTS it is ultimately your responsibility to make sure your system is maintained and operating correctly. Failure to do so is not only illegal but could lead to costly repairs or worse: contamination of wells, groundwater and/or surface water.

Make sure you know when your system requires maintenance by keeping track of servicing events. Proper maintenance of a POWTS is just as important as maintaining your vehicle.

Installer Info:

Maintainer Info:

County Contact:

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POWTS Program

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