



**Natural Resource Services  
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# History

- In November of 1993, the Bernalillo County Commission adopted the Groundwater Protection Policy and Action Plan (GPPAP). The GPPAP outlines steps that should be taken by our community to protect one of our most valuable resources, groundwater. The primary source of drinking water in Bernalillo County is groundwater.
- Septic tanks have been identified as a main source of groundwater contamination, particularly along the Rio Grande Valley where the ground-water table is high. For this reason, both the City and County have made the removal of septic tanks and the connection of homes to municipal sewer lines along the Rio Grande Valley a priority.
- Bernalillo County Wastewater Ordinance requires all homes to connect to municipal sewer lines if their property is located within 200 feet of a sewer line that is available for connection. Different requirements apply for zones determined as commercial. Come talk to us.





# Who Needs an Evaluation?

- Unpermitted Systems – If there is an unpermitted system on a property, a septic evaluation is needed within 90 days (or a connection to sewer must be made, if available). Time extensions are permitted as long as the homeowner is making progress towards permitting the system.
- Septic systems 30 years and older - beginning July 1st, 2015, any existing wastewater system 30 years in age and older, whether or not previously grandfathered, shall have the system evaluated every 5 years





# What is the Evaluation Process?

- Evaluations consist of getting the septic tank pumped and a physical inspection of components for the wastewater system (including the septic tank and disposal field) by a licensed professional.
- Parts of the evaluation may include (but are not limited to):
  - Determination of tank size
  - Tank material
  - Tank Manufacturer
  - Structural integrity of tank
  - Condition of baffle, and effluent filter
  - Determination of functionality of system
  - # of trenches, size of seepage pit, type and size of drip system
  - Functionality of disposal field
  - Physical inspection of tank covers, water levels, sludge and scum levels, set backs
  - Condition of pump





# What is the Cause of Septic System Failure?

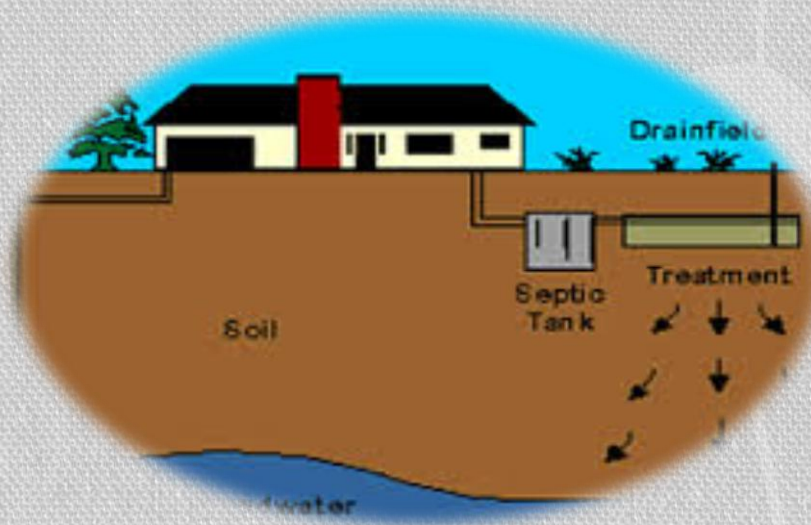
- The most common cause of septic system failure is not having the septic tank pumped and skipping regular maintenance.
  - Solids, scum, and sludge layers accumulate in the tank, obstructing the effluent pipe leading to the drain field, causing a backup inside the home
- Under-sized, or inappropriate design for site
- Invasive root infiltration of the system





# The septic tank was just pumped, does it still need an evaluation?

- Yes!
  - The first step in getting an evaluation completed is having the septic tank pumped. Some companies will even reduce the price of an evaluation when the pumping and evaluation services are combined.
- If the septic system has had a complete evaluation in the last 5 years, Bernalillo County will accept the evaluation





# I've never had my septic tank pumped and it works fine, do I need to get an evaluation?

- YES!
  - Without an evaluation, there is no way to determine the integrity of the tank or if it is harming ground water supplies and the environment.
  - Getting the septic tank pumped and getting an evaluation done every 5 years will help in identifying areas of the system that may be compromised, allowing the homeowner to set aside resources and put together a plan to connect to sewer or make necessary repairs.





# How Much Will An Evaluation Cost?

- The amount of an evaluation is different for every contractor, but typically ranges from 350-650 dollars (including pumping costs).
- Spend Money to Save Money
  - The cost of an evaluation may seem expensive, but it can postpone, or prevent the \$5,000 – \$15,000 needed for total system replacement. Get your septic pumped and evaluated every 5 years. Protect your investment...





# Is Financial Assistance Available?

- System evaluation are paid by the homeowner, but financial assistance is available, based on income guidelines
- Some contractors are willing to make arrangements for payment plans





# Does Bernalillo County Require Permits and Fees?

- Permits are required
  - Unpermitted System? Wastewater Operator Permit, no fee
  - 30 year septic System Evaluation? Wastewater Operator Permit, no fee
  - Connection to Municipal Sewer? Septic Tank Abandonment Permit, no fee





# No Evaluation?

- Bernalillo County may put a hold on ANY permits and licenses for that address.
- County Legal may pursue litigation punishable up to \$300/day or imprisonment or both.
- Backups/ failures may occur, causing messes, and large repair costs
- Contamination into wells, and groundwater, possibly causing illnesses
- Long term damage to the environment





# An Approved Evaluator?

- National Association of Wastewater Technicians (NAWT) Certification
- Licensure as a professional engineer;
- A valid and appropriate classification of licensure by the construction industries division of the regulation and licensing department;
- Certification as a registered environmental health specialist (REHS) or a registered sanitarian (RS);
- Accreditation in on-site wastewater inspection by the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF); certification by the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) as an installer of on-site wastewater treatment systems;
- Demonstration of a similar accreditation or certification or a combination of training and experience as approved by the New Mexico Environment Department or the County



# Helpful Resources



[www.bernco.gov/public-works/financial-assistance.aspx](http://www.bernco.gov/public-works/financial-assistance.aspx)

[www.bernco.gov/public-works/evaluators.aspx](http://www.bernco.gov/public-works/evaluators.aspx)

[www.bernco.gov/public-works/connect-to-municipal-sewer.aspx](http://www.bernco.gov/public-works/connect-to-municipal-sewer.aspx)