



ACT 537 - SEWAGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

What Does It Take? - Part II

This Part II fact sheet continues the discussion of developing and administering a successful sewage management program that was begun in Part I.

Is a sewage management program costly?

Not really. Start-up costs for developing and implementing a sewage management program can range from under \$1,000 for a simple program to over \$30,000 for a higher-end effort. The median start-up cost, however, appears to be approximately \$9,000.

Annual costs for routine administration of a management program can vary from \$1,000 or less to more than \$8,000. The median administrative cost is approximately \$2,600 per year.

Please bear in mind that the cost figures presented in this section reflect largely in-house development and administration, cover routine situations only, and are not adjusted for cost-of-living variations across the state. Your actual results may vary.

What should my municipality expect in developing a sewage management program?

DEP fact sheets “Sewage Management Programs: Ensuring Long-Term Use of Onlot Systems Through Proper Operation and Maintenance” (Parts I and II) provide a good overview of the planning process and possible options and alternatives for establishing a sewage management program.

Most municipalities with a sewage management program administer it using in-house staff. However, there are also instances where sewer or other authorities operate the sewage management program on behalf of one or more municipalities through agreement. In these cases, legal authority for the sewage management program resides with the municipality, and the authority and municipality must coordinate their efforts to assess data, conduct follow-up activities, and enforce management program violations. Multi-municipal and county-based sewage management programs are increasingly becoming a reality, and homeowner associations and other entities operate sewage management programs in some areas of the state.

When developing a sewage management program, a municipality should be prepared. Knowing the locations, the type and specifications, and the condition and needs of the onlot systems in your municipality is essential for adequately structuring a sewage management program. Before setting up your own program, obtain examples of ordinances, supporting documents and/or procedures from other programs that work, and talk to personnel from these programs. Doing your homework ahead of time will help you to avoid pitfalls and implement the program correctly the first time.

In addition, educating your residents, officials and staff, service providers and others about the program and knowing their interests, feelings and capabilities regarding sewage management will further ensure a successful program. DEP fact sheets “Sewage Management Programs: Conducting Education is Key,” (Parts I and II) provide information on how to conduct an education effort.

What are the benefits of a sewage management program?

Municipalities in Pennsylvania are finding that even the simplest sewage management program produces a wealth of benefits, many of which go well beyond operation and maintenance of onlot systems. The following represents some of the benefits and advantages that municipalities with sewage management programs have noted.

Sewage management programs...

- Gain operation and maintenance for onlot systems, help to maintain or improve the performance of onlot systems, extend the life of systems, and reduce malfunctions and failures.

- Provide a proactive approach to dealing with onlot systems. A sound management program produces specifications and condition concerning onlot systems, creates better access to onlot systems by SEOs and other investigators, and ensures timely system repairs and upgrades.
- Help to manage and make consistent the activities of septage pumpers and other service providers.
- Help to educate property owners about onlot systems and improve interactions between residents and the municipality.
- Act as ongoing planning tools for assessing and addressing sewage needs in an informed, practical and cost-effective fashion.
- Can help to maintain property values and ease property transfers. A well-managed program will supply onlot system information to realtors and lenders and demonstrate that onlot systems are well maintained and functioning properly.
- Can supply information that municipalities will need when applying for certain grants. A municipality with a sewage management program will also be perceived as professional in meeting its responsibilities.

What aids and resources are available to help my municipality?

DEP has videos, model and working ordinances, and a growing number of fact sheets, working support documents, and other information and aids to assist municipalities with onlot system education and sewage management program development. Contacts are also available for other agencies and organizations that can help with specific sewage management needs.

Additionally, DEP is developing throughout Pennsylvania a network of peer assistants who are experienced with sewage management programs. The network is made up of public officials, staff members, and others who have developed and/or are active with sewage management programs in their municipalities. These peers are available to answer questions and work with you regarding education efforts and any other sewage management program challenges.

For more information, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Sewage, or contact the DEP regional office in your area:

Southeast Region

2 E. Main St.
Norrstown, PA 19401
Main Telephone: 484-250-5900
24-Hour Emergency: 484-250-5900

Counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia

Southwest Region

400 Waterfront Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745
Main Telephone: 412-442-4000
24-Hour Emergency: 412-442-4000

Counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland

Southcentral Region

909 Elmerton Ave.
Harrisburg, PA 17110
Main Telephone: 717-705-4700
24-Hour Emergency: 1-877-333-1904

Counties: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and York

Northwest Region

230 Chestnut St.
Meadville, PA 16335-3481
Main Telephone: 814-332-6945
24-Hour Emergency: 1-800-373-3398

Counties: Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren

Northeast Region

2 Public Square
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0790
Main Telephone: 570-826-2511
24-Hour Emergency: 570-826-2511

Counties: Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming

Northcentral Region

208 W. Third St., Suite 101
Williamsport, PA 17701
Main Telephone: 570-327-3636
24-Hour Emergency: 570-327-3636

Counties: Bradford, Cameron, Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union