FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) for the new Sewage O&M Program

What is O&M? O&M stands for Operation and Maintenance. After a sewage treatment system (STS) is installed, there is a certain amount of management that should occur to keep an STS working properly so that it does not pollute surface and underground water supplies.

Why is this program being created now in the City of New Philadelphia? On January 1, 2015, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), as directed by the state legislature, adopted the Sewage Treatment System Rules for the entire state of Ohio. These rules are now the minimum standards that all local health districts (LHDs) must follow regarding the treatment of private wastewater in Ohio. Within the next three (3) years, the ODH expects to complete an audit of all LHDs to determine how their sewage O&M programs are being administered.

What will be the costs to property owners with the O&M Program? Fees have not been established yet. A “renewable” sewage operation permit will now be required. Additionally, a sewage operation inspection fee may be charged by the health district for any inspection conducted of an existing STS to administer the O&M program.

What does the term “renewable” mean? Renewable means that operation permits will have expiration limits that then require the application for and purchase of a new permit.

Is there a penalty if I don’t pay? Failure to pay operation and/or inspection fees will result in an additional 25% penalty fee. All unpaid fees will be added to the property owner’s taxes.

When will the O&M program begin? After adoption of the Sewage O&M Program by the City of New Philadelphia Board of Health, the program will become effective January 12th, 2023. Applications for new sewage operation permits will then be mailed, since after that date all previous sewage operation permits (if issued before January 1, 2015) will no longer be valid. Following the receipt of the new sewage operation permit application, all applicable fees, and completion of an assessment of the STS by the New Philadelphia Health District, a new sewage operation permit will be mailed to the property owner.

Will the assessment let me know what type of sewage system I have? Yes, the assessment by the New Philadelphia City Health District (NPCHD) either through a records search of the NPCHD files or if no valid sewage permit can be located then by an on-site inspection will allow for all STSs to be identified and categorized into one of three (3) separate operation permit cycles (see Table 1).

What if I have an old sewage system that is not up to the present code? If no “public health nuisance” is observed during the initial assessment phase, then no other changes are required other than installing applicable risers and/or inspection/sampling ports to aid in the future maintenance and inspection of the system.

If my STS has “failed” due to it not draining properly or because it is creating a public health nuisance, how much time will I have to fix it? The NPCHD will work with each property owner to create an “incremental repair and/or replacement plan” to address the nuisance condition or system failure in a timely manner.

After the first round of assessments by the health district, will anyone else be allowed to conduct on-site sewage operation permit inspections? Yes, service providers such as septic tank cleaners, STS installers, even property owners themselves for their own residences (after registering and passing a sewage exam) can conduct the operation permit inspections. However, if no alternative arrangement is made by the property owner for an operation inspection to be completed during the permit cycle, the LCHD will conduct an inspection and charge the appropriate fee.

If I wish to sell my house, will I have to escrow money to cover the cost of a future replacement system? Only if a nuisance condition is observed at the time of the sale would arrangements have to be made for an “incremental repair/replacement plan,” otherwise such arrangements are strictly between the buyer and seller.

If I sell my house will the new owner have to purchase a new operation permit? No, the operation permit is connected to the sewage system. The operation permit would not have to be renewed by the new owner until it expires, although in some cases it could be annually.

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| Table 1. Inspection Requirements | |
| Frequency Group | Requirement |
| A. Systems With Mechanical Components  \*Excludes systems with NPDES permit\*  (lift stations, aerators, pumps etc.)  Including but not limited to:   * Aerator to leach trenches, mound, SSF * Drip Distribution System * ST to Lift Station to Leaching Trenches * Lift Station to any other STS * Unknown STS | One Inspection Per Permit Cycle  (1 time per 1 year) |
| B. Off Lot/Discharging Systems  (Septic Tank (ST) to filter beds, NPDES, etc.)  Including but not limited to:   * ST to SSF (Discharging) * ST to Filter Bed (Discharging) * All NPDES systems | One Inspection per Permit Cycle (1 time per 5 years) |
| C. On Lot Systems (Septic Tank (ST) to leach field, etc.)  Including but not limited to:   * ST to leaching trenches * ST to Filter Bed (Non-Discharging) * GWRS | One Inspection per Permit Cycle (1 time per 10 years) |