

**ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

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**Guidelines for Submission of Property Transfer  
Inspections by Design Professionals**

The basic purpose of property transfer inspections is to determine if an onsite wastewater treatment system is in conformity with Article IV, Section 2 of the Erie County Sanitary Code: exposure of sewage. This section states that no person may permit discharge or exposure of sewage to the atmosphere, on the surface of the ground or into a water course or body of water. Certification also requires that any individual water systems be free of coliform bacteria and meet basic health requirements.

A property transfer dye test can be completed for a home that has been vacant for less than 90 days, has an onsite wastewater treatment system on record and has a metered water supply. Property transfers conducted when there is snow cover or when the ground is frozen will not be accepted. For those homes that have been vacant for greater than 90 days, and either do not have a system of record, or have an unmetered water supply, a waiver will be required.

**ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM**

1. A check of the visible plumbing must be completed. This is needed to assure that all sanitary wastes from kitchens, bathroom and laundry rooms are going into the onsite wastewater treatment system. All non-sanitary wastes such as sump drains, roof gutters, etc. are not allowed to go into the onsite wastewater treatment system. **All** of these plumbing lines must be properly connected or disconnected **before** dye tests are done.
2. A diagram of the onsite wastewater treatment system that includes all the onsite wastewater treatment system components locations and sizes and the distances to the residence, well (if needed) and property lines.
3. A water-soluble fluoresce (tracer) type dye must be introduced into the waste system from several locations. Sufficient water should be used so that dye is getting into the treatment system.
4. A general property survey must be done following the introduction of the dye to see if it is surfacing on or near the property. The dye test will run for a minimum of three days with the possibility of running for four or five days.

5. Adequate water use must be continued during the dye test.
  - a. For homes with municipal water, meter readings should be taken at the beginning and at the conclusion of the dye test. At a minimum, it is expected that at 100 gallons per day per bedroom will have been introduced into the system during the dye test.
  - b. Homes having their own individual water systems require good judgment be used to assure that water is being introduced into the system whenever dye test observations are being done. Run the water for an estimated length of time equal to 100 gallons per day per bedroom, if available. Water should be introduced into the sewage disposal system on each day that the dye test is being done or checked.
6. A second general property survey must be done 3 or 4 days after the initial introduction of they dye to see if dye has surfaced on or near the property.
7. If a sand filter system has a direct discharge, the discharge point must be inspected. A properly operating system should remove much of the dye coloring. The discharge should not have any indications of any “septic” conditions such as sludge deposits.
8. If an onsite wastewater treatment system has an aerobic digestive unit, it should be checked to assure that the aeration unit is operating.
9. If the system contains a pump or siphon it must be examined and a determination must be made that it is operational. Also, for pumps the audible/visual alarm must be tested to ensure that it is functioning.
10. If a sand filter system serves the property and the dye test is inconclusive a BOD sample may be taken from the discharge of the sand filter prior to the downstream absorption system. Failure will be determined based on the BOD result (>30 mg/l equals failure) and the engineers report statements in regards to the dye test.
11. Results of the tracer dye test are weather dependent. Any snow cover that occurs during the test period will invalidate the results thus necessitating a retesting of the onsite wastewater treatment system during acceptable weather conditions.
12. Any onsite wastewater treatment system, which is found to be discharging sewage onto the ground surface or into surface waters (i.e.: tracer dye has surfaced) shall be reported promptly to the Erie County Department of Health at 716-961-6800.
13. An onsite wastewater treatment system determined to be in failure must make necessary corrections to the system. All construction or repair of onsite wastewater treatment systems must be approved by the Erie County Department of Health prior to work being started.

## WATER SYSTEM

1. If the property is served by a well, then a sanitary survey and inspection of the water system must be conducted.
2. The sanitary survey must include determining the distances to potential sources of pollution including onsite wastewater treatment systems, surface water sources, fuel storage tanks and any other potential source of pollution on the property and neighboring properties.
3. The inspection must include the well, all visible internal plumbing, the pressure tank, disinfection system, other treatment systems (i.e. water softeners) and any storage facilities.
  - a. Items required for the well are:
    - i. Casing above ground level
    - ii. A proper sanitary seal on drilled wells
    - iii. Standing water or ground depressed around well casing
    - iv. No surface water sources are allowed without a proper treatment system that includes filtration
    - v. An excavated (dug) well will require either installation of a filtration and disinfection system or abandon the well and install a new drilled well.
  - b. Items required for the remainder of the water system are:
    - i. No cross connections between the potable water system and an unsanitary condition
    - ii. The softener backwash is not directly connected to a sanitary pipe or floor drain
    - iii. The disinfection system is operating properly
    - iv. The system components are in general operating properly
4. A bacteriological sample is required to be taken from the water system serving the residence. The bacteriological sample must be analyzed for total coliform. If the total coliform sample is positive it must be analyzed for e.coli. The test must be conducted at a laboratory that is certified by New York State for testing potable water. (A list of certified laboratories is available at <http://www.wadsworth.org/labcert/elap/elap.html> ).
5. If chlorination is being used to disinfect the water supply, a chlorine residual test must also be taken at the same time as the bacteriological sample is taken. If the chlorine residual is greater than 2.0 ppm the bacteriological sample can not be taken and submitted for analysis. Any bacteriological sample result received with a chlorine residual greater than 2.0 ppm will not be accepted.
6. If the sample result is positive for coliform bacteria or e.coil the well and water system should be disinfected with chlorine, flushed and then resampled. If the resample has a result that is positive for total coliform then disinfection is required. If the property already has a disinfection system then appropriate measures must be taken to correct the problem.
7. The only acceptable test result is the “absence of coliform bacteria” (negative).
8. Generally, a bacteriological sample is the only test that is required. However, unusual water conditions such as strong odors, tastes or colors may require additional sampling to determine what is causing the condition.
9. Information on well yields is not required unless very poor water quantity is observed.
10. A resource for water systems and their construction, quantity, and quality is Appendix 5-B by the New York State Department of Health Sanitary Code

## ENGINEER'S REPORT

1. A written report for the property transfer must be submitted to this Department that contains all information needed to show that the onsite wastewater treatment system has passed the dye test and that the water supply meets the minimum requirements described in these guidelines, a sketch of the property, copies of the sample results from the bacteriological sample, photographs of the well and any other pertinent information.
2. The report should be sent to the Department of Health. The required fee of \$150.00 and a property transfer application must be submitted to the Health Department. (Application attached). The check must be made out to the Erie County Department of Health.
3. The Department of Health will review the reports and if satisfactory a Property Transfer Certificate will be issued.
4. The Certificate will show if the Department of Health has in its records information showing what size of sewage disposal system was installed. When our records do not have any information about the sewage system size, the Certificate will state "existing installation details unknown."
5. Please allow 5-10 business days for the review of your report and issuance of a Property Transfer Certificate.