



**Bureau of Environmental Services  
ONSITE SEWAGE SYSTEM REPAIR PROTOCOL**

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**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this protocol is to respond to public health concerns that are reported to the Department and to ascertain and document if the repair is in compliance with applicable Alabama Law and the State Board of Health Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Rules, Chapter 420-3-1. Ala. Admin. Code.

The objective of the Local County Health Department (LHD) concerning any Onsite Sewage System (OSS) failure or any unapproved sewage discharge reported to the LHD is to ensure that the OSS is repaired or replaced by the homeowner, or that responsible person to abate the unsanitary condition.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**REPAIR** – a corrective action taken to repair, improve or reestablish a component of an OSS where the OSS design parameters (BOD, flow, etc.) have not changed. A component is any part of an OSS which is not defined as maintenance (420-3-1-.01).

**REPLACEMENT**- an action to replace an OSS when BOD or flow has changed, when requested by the applicant, or when there is an overriding environmental health reason to require a total replacement of the OSS. A replacement is considered a new system and shall meet all current rules of a new OSS (420-3-1-.01).

**PUBLIC HEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL SOIL SPECIALIST (PHESS)** - a full time employee of ADPH or a LHD who has completed the required training, testing and certification requirements for evaluating Effluent Disposal Field (EDF) site using soil morphology. A PHESS may evaluate sites for a Conventional OSS. The PHESS shall be currently employed by the ADPH, conduct these evaluations only in counties approved by ADPH for this program that charge a fee for site evaluation, and adhere to the requirements of these rules. This applies to conventional Small Flow Systems only.

**SOIL PROFESSIONAL**- a member of a profession or any person who earns their living from a specified professional activity; for example, PE, PLS, Geologist, PSC.

**RESPONSIBLE PERSON**- in the case of a private dwelling, it is the property owner, or his or her authorized agent. In the case of a corporation, it is a principal executive officer. In the case of a partnership, it is a general partner. In the case of a sole proprietorship, it is the proprietor. In the case of a municipal, state, federal, or other public entity, it is either a principal executive

officer or ranking elected official.

**FAILURE-** a breakage, weakness, or defect that causes a malfunction in the treatment, distribution, disposal, or dispersal of effluent into the EDF, or that causes a wash-out or disruption of the EDF as evidenced by one of the following:

- (a) Surfacing or ponding of effluent at, over or around any component of the OSS.
- (b) Backing up of sewage within a dwelling or establishment as a result of a malfunction of the OSS.
- (c) The contamination of ground or surface waters by an OSS.

### **DOCUMENTATION**

When the LHD is contacted by a homeowner or responsible person concerning a possible OSS failure, the Public Health Environmentalist (PHE) shall do a record search to determine if the OSS system is an approved system. If the OSS system is an approved system, an Approval for Use shall be on record.

If the Approval for Use is on file, the following options are allowed:

- a septic tank or a non-perforated component (solid supply lines, solid headers, crossovers, spillovers) may be repaired/replaced with a verbal permit from the LHD to an installer. The installer shall contact the LHD on the date of installation and if applicable, provide the tank number, along with other pertinent information of the repair. If time allows, the PHE may inspect the installation of the tank or non-perforated component. The PHE shall document the repair in the database.
- If the existing EDF is to be repaired, the homeowner must contact a soil professional to design or size a repair. The soil professional may perform his/her own tests or use soil data from the original permit if site conditions have not changed. This will require a CEP 2 application, and a plot plan, along with the appropriate fee if applicable, before a Permit to Repair is issued. If new soil data is reported, a CEP 2/3 form must be submitted.

**If the Approval for Use is not on file at the LHD or cannot be provided by the homeowner then:**

- **The applicant must contact an ADPH Soil Classifier (if available) or a soil professional for a professional site evaluation and follow the requirements for a new OSS system. A site professional may certify and incorporate certain components of the unapproved system as long as they meet Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Rules.**

### **Licensed Installers and the LHD**

Installers shall promptly complete and submit CEP-5 forms for repair installations as set forth in rule 420-3-1-.49. The LHD and AOWB licensed installers shall follow rule 420-3-1-.07 (OSS Installation for repairs/replacements).

### **ENGINEERED SYSTEMS**

If the failing OSS system is an engineered system, a professional engineer must propose and design a repair.