

Operation & Maintenance Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Operation & Maintenance (O&M) and why do I need an Operation Permit?

The O&M Program is a state-wide initiative to ensure proper maintenance of Home Sewage Treatment Systems (HSTSs) to protect public health, minimize pollution of Ohio waters, and extend the lifetime of private sewage systems. Operation permits are required for all private sewage treatment systems by the Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3701-29. Permits additionally provide homeowners with education on system maintenance. Additional resources can be found at: <https://www.lcghd.org/om-program/>.

2. When did LCGHD's program start? How are systems being enrolled and what is the timeline?

LCGHD started implementation of a phased approach of enrollment into the O&M program in 2015 following the adoption of the Ohio sewage rule update. Lake County has an estimated 13-15,000 Home Sewage Treatment Systems (HSTSs), all of which are scheduled for entry by the end of 2024, although these projections are based on estimates and may change. LCGHD is in its fifth, and final, enrollment phase.

3. What are the requirements for my Home Sewage Treatment System (HSTS)?

The maintenance & documentation requirements for your HSTS can be found in your Operation Permit and are determined by system design. Compliance with permit conditions is judged based on submission of service contracts, service reports, and/or pump reports by Lake County-registered service providers and pumpers. For specific guidance on required documentation, please refer to our [O&M Program Quick Guide](#).

4. How do I find out what type of HSTS I have and what fees will be assessed to me?

A copy of your HSTS records can be requested by calling (440)350-2543. Your fee will be based on system design. Fees are paid upon enrollment, and renewal, of operation permits (either annually or every 5 years).

5. Will I have to update my old HSTS if it no longer meets current installation code requirements?

No. Systems will not be "failed" based solely on age, but instead evaluated on performance. Ohio law allows HSTSs in operation prior to 2015 to be deemed approved if they are not causing a public health nuisance.

6. Will I have to replace my HSTS if it is found to be creating a public health nuisance?

Not necessarily. If the nuisance situation can be eliminated by approved repairs, then the system will be deemed compliant. If repairs are not possible, LCGHD will review replacement options with homeowners.

7. How can I pay for the Operation Permit?

LCGHD accepts cash, checks, and credit card (additional fee applies). Payment can be mailed with the invoice, dropped off in person at our office, or paid online per the instructions provided in the O&M letter.

8. How will I be notified of my permit fee & requirements? What happens if I do not pay the fee?

LCGHD will provide notice by regular mail at least one month prior to the permit fee payment due date. If payment is not received by the due date, a final notice will be sent certified mail with an additional 25% late penalty. If the fee is not paid following the final notice, LCGHD will place the fee and late penalty on the tax bill as a lien. Ohio law allows the fiscal office to charge a fee to cover the cost of placing fees on taxes. The lien will then be required to be paid in the next tax year. The final notice will include information on how a homeowner may appeal the action to place a lien.



9. What is LCGHD planning to do with the monies collected through Operation Permit fees?

The money generated from the O&M program will pay for the materials used for mailings, postage for mailings, and personnel costs for administering the program. Personnel costs include preparing mailings, maintaining the database, reviewing service reports, following up on non-compliance & system performance issues, providing homeowner education, and conducting quality control of registered service providers.

10. Who can perform the required maintenance on my HSTS?

Any registered service provider certified to service your type of HSTS can perform the required maintenance. A list of providers with the system types they service can be found at: <https://www.lcghd.org/om-program/>.

Do I have to use a registered service provider?

Some HSTSs require that a registered service provider perform the required maintenance while other systems may only require proof of pumping from a registered septage hauler. In some cases, for systems that were installed prior to 2007, homeowners may even become certified and provide their own maintenance. Contact LCGHD to determine the service provider requirements for your system.

12. Who submits the proof of required maintenance? How soon must reports be submitted?

A registered service provider or septage hauler must submit proof of service within 60 days of service. You can also submit scanned/photographed documents through our web portal. See O&M letter for instructions.

13. What happens if I don't do the required maintenance?

Not completing required maintenance may shorten the life expectancy of your system. A Non-Compliance inspection will be performed by LCGHD on a pass/fail basis for an additional fee. If the system fails inspection, orders may be issued to repair/replace your HSTS.

14. Is there any help for homeowners who cannot afford to replace their HSTS?

LCGHD is always in search of grants and low interest loans for low income families to replace their HSTSs. For 2022, LCGHD has been awarded \$150,000 in funding from Ohio EPA Water Pollution Control Loan Fund to assist low-income-eligible homeowners with the repair/replacement of failing septic systems.

15. Do Operation permits transfer ownership upon sale of a home?

Yes. Once a system is enrolled into the program, the Operation Permit issued will remain associated with the system and will transfer automatically to the new owner upon sale. Sellers are responsible for disclosing details of the operation permit terms & conditions to buyers. Please inform LCGHD of property transfers so that owner contact and billing information can be updated.

16. I have questions about my Home Sewage Treatment System (HSTS). Who should I call?

Call Lake County General Health District Environmental Division at (440) 350-2543.

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**Lake County
General Health District**

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