

Stark County Health Department Guide to Selecting Sewage Treatment System (STS) Contractors

SEPTIC INSTALLERS - The Stark County Health Department (SCHD) registers system contractors. Installation contractors are responsible for installing or repairing STS's in conformance with State of Ohio STS Rules and the permit issued by SCHD. SCHD cannot recommend a system contractor; however, the following checklist should help you select a qualified contractor.

- Get cost estimates from at least three different contractors, in writing. Prices may vary widely between contractors. Compare estimates carefully, a high price does not always mean the best quality, and a price that is too low may mean the contractor is leaving something out that you will have to pay for later. Verify what the price quote includes; ask questions if you are unsure. Installation Contractors must be registered with SCHD; verify the registration. Two conditions of registration are that the installer be bonded and insured. You can call SCHD or go to our website at: https://starkhealth.org/government/offices/public_health/environmental_health/sewage.php to verify if a contractor is registered.
- Do YOUR due diligence! Ask how long they have been installing STS's. If you need to install a specialized system, ask about system specific training or experience with the system. Check references; a good contractor should be able to provide you with references. Contact your local Better Business Bureau (or visit their website) to determine the contractor's rating and if complaints have been filed. Check for online reviews of the contractor(s).
- Get it in writing! It is best to have a written contract, to specify roles and responsibilities for you and the contractor. A contract protects you, as the owner, in case there is a dispute over the work. Make sure you understand all the terms and conditions in the contract. While many contracts are standard "boilerplate", you should consider having an attorney review the contract. Examples of terms and conditions in the contract include, but are not limited to:
 - Payment terms: Those terms should be specified in the contract and final payment should be due on completion and health department (SCHD) approval.
 - Scope of work: A description of what is included in the work and what is excluded, for example, finish grading and seeding.
 - Schedule: When will the contractor start and finish?
 - Warranty: Verify whether there is a warranty period on completed work.
 - Roles and Responsibilities (of the owner and contractor). For example, do you obtain the permit, or does the system contractor? If property is damaged, who fixes it, etc.
 - Permits: In addition to the SCHD permit there may be other permits required, e.g. electrical permit, plumbing permit, ODOT Permit, NPDES Permit. Who is responsible to obtain these permits?

SEPTAGE HAULERS - Like STS Installers, SCHD also registers Septage Haulers (tank pumpers). Septage Haulers are responsible for cleaning septic tanks by removing the sewage and disposing of the collected sewage at approved sites in conformance with State of Ohio STS Rules. SCHD cannot recommend a septage hauler; however, the following checklist should help you select a qualified contractor.

- Know your system and keep records. STS records and educational materials are available at: https://starkhealth.org/government/offices/public_health/environmental_health/sewage.php.

- Cost Estimates: Three estimates are recommended, as prices may vary widely between contractors. Costs are typically based on the size of the septic tank(s).
- Registration: Make sure the septic hauler has a hauler's registration issued by SCHED.
- Do YOUR due diligence! Ask how long they have been cleaning septic tanks and how many tanks they pump per year. Check references: A good hauler should be able to provide you with references. Contact your local Better Business Bureau (or visit their website) to determine the contractor's rating and if complaints have been filed.
- Ask what procedures are used and where the waste is disposed of.
 - All of the contents of the septic tank should be removed. If pumping an aerator, it should be done in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. In either case, if risk of tank flotation exists, it should be at least partially refilled with clean water.
 - Some tanks are equipped with a filter in the outlet tee. Verify if this will also be cleaned.
 - Ask the hauler where they dispose of the sewage. Ohio Rules require that they dispose of waste only at approved sites or facilities. The hauler should be able to provide you with a contact with the facility. A call to the facility is recommended to verify that the hauler is in good standing.
 - When tank pumping is completed you should receive a report from the contractor. To view what the report should look like go to the following website: <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/sewage-treatment-systems/forms/pump-report>. Unlike system installations, there is no independent verification that all tank(s) and compartments were adequately pumped. To verify adequate pumping, you should consider being onsite when the pumping is being done and actually looking into the tank upon completion.
 - Additives: Many system cleaners recommend and sell additives. SCHED does not recommend any additives. State Rules are silent on the addition of tank and/or leach line additives. If you are considering additives, it is recommended that multiple opinions and price quotes are obtained. Additionally, the chemical should be researched to determine if it is harmful and/or helpful. One source of information is the State of Washington Department of Health. Please bear in mind the list is not all-inclusive. <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/337-025.pdf>