

Local Housing Regulation Database

Summary of Septics/Sewer Survey Questions

This document summarizes some commonly used regulatory practices pertaining to septic systems and sewers adopted by Massachusetts cities and towns. The information provided is a sample of data from the Local Housing Regulation Database; the entire database can be downloaded at www.pioneerinstitute/municipalregs. Documentation on the database, including variable definitions, descriptions of how the data were collected, and discussions of the land use issues, can be found on the same website.

Does the municipality have its own regulations for on-site sub-surface sewage disposal systems (i.e. septic systems) that go beyond Title 5's requirements?

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Municipalities</u>
Yes	109
No	78

What is the highest "depth to groundwater" minimum requirement in any area of the city/town (number of feet)?

"Depth to groundwater" refers to the minimum vertical separation distance between the stone underlying the soil absorption system and the high groundwater elevation. State regulations require 4-5 feet minimum, depending on percolation rate.

Mean:	5.14
St. dev:	0.35

What does the municipality require for the design flow in gallons per bedroom per day?

The state requires capacity to accommodate 110 gallons per bedroom per day without a garbage disposal or a 50 percent increase (165 gallons per bedroom per day) with a garbage disposal.

Mean:	119.2
St. dev:	19.6

What is the municipality's maximum allowable percolation rate (minutes per inch)?

The state requires a maximum of 60 minutes per inch.

Mean:	51.4
St. dev:	15.3

If the city/town requires a minimum size for the leaching field, what is the size requirement (square feet)?

This is coded as the minimum size for a leaching field that can serve a three bedroom house without percolation rate additions.

Mean: 747.3
St. dev: 195.9

What setback distance (in feet) does the municipality require between a soil absorption system and the property line?

Title 5 requires that soil absorption systems are set back at least 10 feet from the property line.

Mean: 12.3
St. dev: 4.9

What setback distance (in feet) does the municipality require between a soil absorption system and bordering vegetated wetlands?

Title 5 requires that soil absorption systems are set back at least 50 feet from bordering vegetated wetlands.

Mean: 79.7
St. dev: 41.1

What setback distance (in feet) does the city/town require between the soil absorption system and private wells?

Title 5 requires that soil absorption systems are set back at least 100 feet from private wells.

Mean: 108.8
St. dev: 23.6

Does the municipality limit the times of year when percolation tests to be observed?

The state does not set restrictions on the times of the year that percolation tests can be conducted.

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Municipalities</u>
Yes	21
No	87

Does the town limit the months when septic systems can be installed/constructed?

Title 5 does not restrict the times when septic systems can be installed.

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Municipalities</u>
Yes	16
No	93

Does the municipality prohibit shared septic systems?

According to Title 5, a shared system serves more than one facility or more than one dwelling on a single facility.

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Municipalities</u>
Yes	29
No	80

According to municipal officials, what percentage of the city/town is serviced by public sewer?

These estimates were given by staff at the Board of Health or Department of Public Works.

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Municipalities</u>
No houses on sewer	53
1-25%	20
26-50%	21
51-75%	23
76-98%	43
99-100%	26

Does the municipality require developers of new housing to participate in an inflow and infiltration program?

Some municipalities require developers of new housing to remove one, two, or more times the amount of inflow of non-wastewater into the sewer system as the new development is projected to introduce in wastewater.

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Municipalities</u>
Yes	41
No	89

What are the city/town's sewer hook-up fees per dwelling (dollars)?

Mean: \$1498
St. dev: \$2167