

The West Tisbury Board of Health has issued a public health advisory regarding the importance of regular septic system maintenance. While pumping frequency is a function of use, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection recommends that a properly maintained septic system should be pumped out at least once every 3 years for homes not having a garbage disposal. If the home's system has a garbage disposal, it should be pumped every year. Routine septic pumping is essential for preventing costly repairs and protecting island's environment and water quality.

If you are a nonresidential system owner, you should determine how often to pump based on prior accumulation and pumping records. Often you can look at pumping intervals to gauge your pumping schedule (i.e., previously did you wait too long before having your tank pumped and it was filled to capacity, or could you have waited a little longer to pump?).

To help residents make informed decisions, recommended steps for arranging septic services are as follows:

**1. Verify Credentials**

- Confirm that the company is licensed by the Board of Health in your town

**2. Get Multiple Quotes**

- Obtain estimates from at least two companies for comparison
- Ask if they charge for travel or if there are additional fees

**3. Request a Written Estimate**

- Always get a clear, written estimate before any work starts
- The estimate should include details like: loading fee, Board of Health permit fee, labor and any additional charges

**4. Ask for References or Reviews**

- Look up reviews online or ask friends and family for references
- Be wary if they have no reviews or a history of complaints

**5. Clarify What's Included in the Service**

- Ask if the price includes labor, sludge removal, disposal fees, using additional equipment: extra hose or camera line to check for clogs
- Make sure there are no hidden fees (e.g. weekend/holiday surcharge)

**6. Confirm Tank Location and Size**

- If you do not have records of your septic tank location and size, contact your Board of Health to request a sketch/plan to be sent to you
- When a pumper arrives and assesses your septic system, confirm there will be no additional charges before pumping

## **7. Avoid Pressure Tactics**

- Be cautious of companies that try to upsell unnecessary repairs or push you to make an immediate decision
- Septic pumping companies cannot perform any septic repairs unless they have:
  - a) A Disposal Works Repair Permit AND
  - b) A Disposal System Installer's Permit issued by the Board of Health

## **8. Get a Service Report**

- Request to detailed service report, including number of gallons pumped, tank conditions, amount of sludge, and any issues found
- Keep this record for future reference