

MAINE ASSOCIATION of SITE EVALUATORS

Septic System Inspection Guidelines

Approved February 26, 2002

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MASE INVOLVEMENT

- Why we developed the Guidelines?
- How we developed the Guidelines?
- Fundamental Principles upon which the Guidelines are based.

INTRODUCTION

Maine: 600,000 dwellings

270,000 dwellings on sewer

330,000 dwellings on septic

89 MILLION gals/day of wastewater
treated by septic systems

BACKGROUND

- USEPA, NOAA reviewed MAINE's SWD Rules and determined it to be acceptable with the exception of septic system inspection program
- At RISK is about \$ 250,000 of Federal Funding
- MAINE DEP had tried several years ago through LEGISLATIVE process UNSUCCESSFULLY
- MAINE DEP contacted MASE TRC and asked if it would try to develop MINIMUM GUIDELINES

MASE TRC Involvement

Initially was unsuccessful

- What was the purpose of the TEST? Environmental Quality or Functionality of the Septic System?
- The type of TESTING would dictate who would be Qualified to do inspections?
- Who OWNS the information? CLIENT/BUYER, STATE
- What level of TESTING was needed? STRESS LOAD, INVASIVE, COMPONENTS OBSERVED
- CLASSES OF STATUS, DEFINITIONS FAILING, PASSING

MASE TRC REVISITED the TOPIC

DEP Clarified some issues and understandings

- MINIMUM and VOLUNTARY
- MASE TRC sought assistance from:
 - MAINE ASSOCIATION OF WASTE HAULERS
 - SEPTIC TANK PUMPERS
 - BUILDING INSPECTORS
 - STATE REGULATORS
 - SANITARIANS

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

- Program should be VOLUNTARY
- Best TIME for INSPECTION at SALE of PROPERTY, genuine interest and access
- INFORMATION sole property of CLIENT
- SEPTIC SYSTEM INSPECTIONS should allow for and be inclusive of the various professionals providing the service.
- MASE should work with other groups to promote the SCIENCE and ART through education
- ALL of the septic system inspection community should be fully involved with developing the agreed upon standards
- STANDARDS would be revisited with time and upgraded

OVERSIGHT OF SEPTIC SYSTEM INSPECTION PROGRAM

DEP → DHE

- MASE involvement started with DEP
- DEP allocated program to DHE
- DHE adopted a small portion of the MASE Guidelines, developed its own requirements but made reference to MASE standards which causes concerns, confusion

DIFFERENCES

- MASE GUIDELINES

Level 1

Inspect Septic Tank

Level 2

Inspect Disposal Field

FAILING

High Liquid Level in Field

- DHE GUIDELINES

Inspect Septic Tank

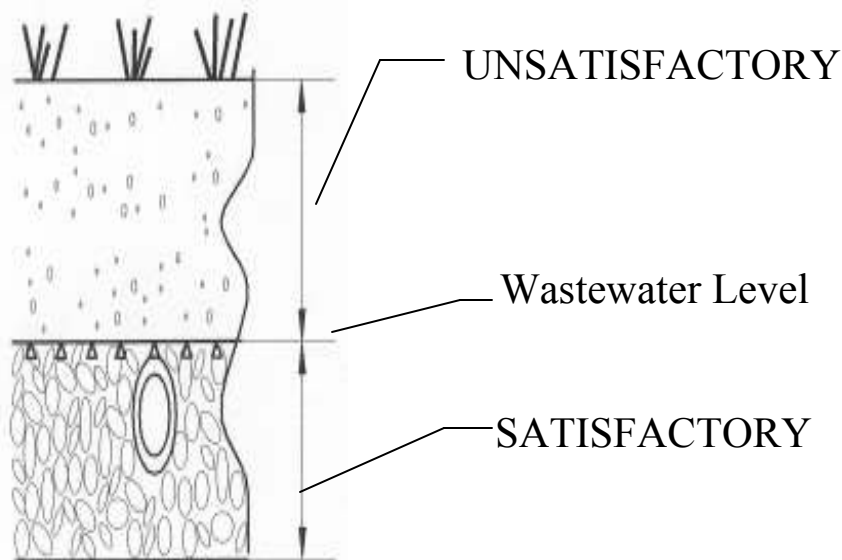
Observe Ground

FAILING

Per CODE Failure,
Wastewater on surface of
ground

Division of Health Engineering

MASE

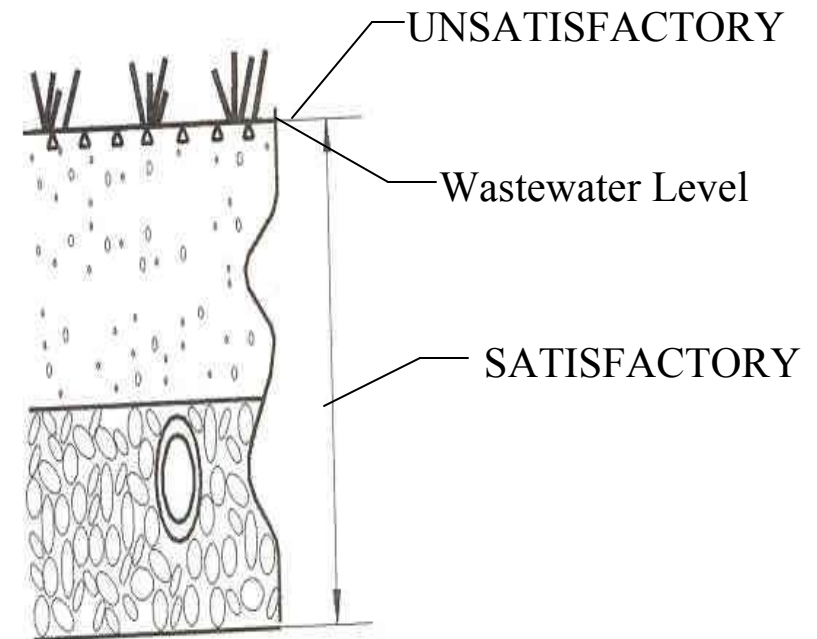


Level I

*Infer problem with liquid in septic tank outlet pipe & ground observation

Level II

*Need to dig Observation Hole into Disposal Area



*No Observation Required into Disposal Bed

1. LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

-Subject to political process, Democracy

2. RULEMAKING subject to ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE ACT

-Subject to APA, AG Office, Democracy

3. “VOLUNTARY” CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

-No Due Process

-“Form” becomes “Vehicle” for Conformance

-“STANDARDS written into Form by Regulator without Review Process

*Components for inspection dictated by Form

*Definitions of FAILING dictated by Form

*Setback issues dictated by Form

BUYER →	DISPOSAL SYSTEM ←	SELLER
MASE FOCUS	STATE FOCUS	
Inspector Working For <u>CLEINT</u>	State's <u>NEUTRAL</u>	
<u>Unsatisfactory Above Stone/Unit</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory Above Grade (malfunction)</u>	
Functionality Of system to meet User's needs	Compliance Issues/ Setbacks CODE DATES	
More Demanding consistent with Private Sector Requirement	Less Demanding for Private Sector Needs; More Demanding on Code Enforcement/ Compliance	

MASE

SYSTEM STATUS

DEFINITIONS

- Satisfactory (properly functioning)
- Failure (not functioning properly)
- Other

- **SATISFACTORY** (*properly functioning*)
- Following conditions were observed:
 - 1) System in operation at time of use and the septic tank had not been pumped recently, which would influence normal water levels at time of inspection.
 - 2) Liquid level of wastewater in septic tank was observed at invert of septic tank outlet.
 - 3) Liquid level observed in stone bed was below top of stone, and liquid level in proprietary leaching device was at or below invert of inlet/outlet of device(s).
 - 4) No signs of previous high water levels (e.g. staining), previous outbreaks or backups.

- **FAILURE** (*not functioning properly*)
- One or more of the following conditions observed:
 - 1) Outbreak of wastewater effluent observed on ground surface or pipe discharging to ditch, water body, or ground surface.
 - 2) Liquid level in septic tank above invert of outlet pipe showing abnormal conditions.
 - 3) Liquid level in disposal area above stone or proprietary leaching device(s).
 - 4) Backup of sewage into household, other than a temporary blockage (Definition by Code).
 - 5) Pollution to the surface waters or ground waters (Definition by Code).

- **OTHER** (*qualified limited functional*)
- A system that is observed to not fully comply with either SATISFACTORY or FAILURE categories.
- If classifying the disposal system as OTHER, the Inspector is responsible to comment on the reason(s) for this classification.
- The following situations may be cause for “OTHER” classification (but not limited to):
 - 1. System not currently being used
 - 2. Recently pumped septic tank that has not had sufficient time to fill to operational level
 - 3. Excessively high water usage conditions
 - 4. Special existing conditions that need to be clarified by further testing
 - 5. Evidence of abnormally high liquid levels in septic tank in past (staining)
 - 6. Septic tank baffles missing /damaged or leaking
 - 7. Pump station or D-box with significant amount of solids in it.

SEPTIC SYSTEM INSPECTION CERTIFICATION

I, _____, have conducted a septic system
Printed name of Septic System Inspector

inspection that complies with the Minimum Standards published by the Maine
Association of Site Evaluators below.

LEVEL 1 BASIC Septic System Inspection

- Plan, Permit Review
 - Internal Review/Plumbing Connections
 - Septic Tank
 - Outlet Baffles
 - Liquid Level
 - Disposal Area
- See Attached Written Report/Comments and Plans

LEVEL 2 COMPREHENSIVE Septic Inspection

- Plan, Permit Review
 - Internal Review/Plumbing Connection
 - Septic Tank
 - Outlet Baffles
 - Liquid Level
 - Pump Station (if a component)
 - Distribution Box (optional)
 - Grease Trap (if part of system)
 - Disposal Area
- See Attached Written Report and Plan

This certifies that I observed all the necessary components prescribed and conducted an objective, professional inspection in order to record and report the factual observations and appropriate conditions.

The Septic System is classified as:

- Satisfactory** (properly performing)
- Failure** (improperly performing)
- Other** (qualified)

Signature

date

PROMOTE

- STANDARDIZATION
- EDUCATION
- TRAINING
- PRIVATE SECTOR DRIVEN:
 - Real Estate Industry does more to ‘police’ and upgrade septic systems than government
 - Private Sector is more demanding.