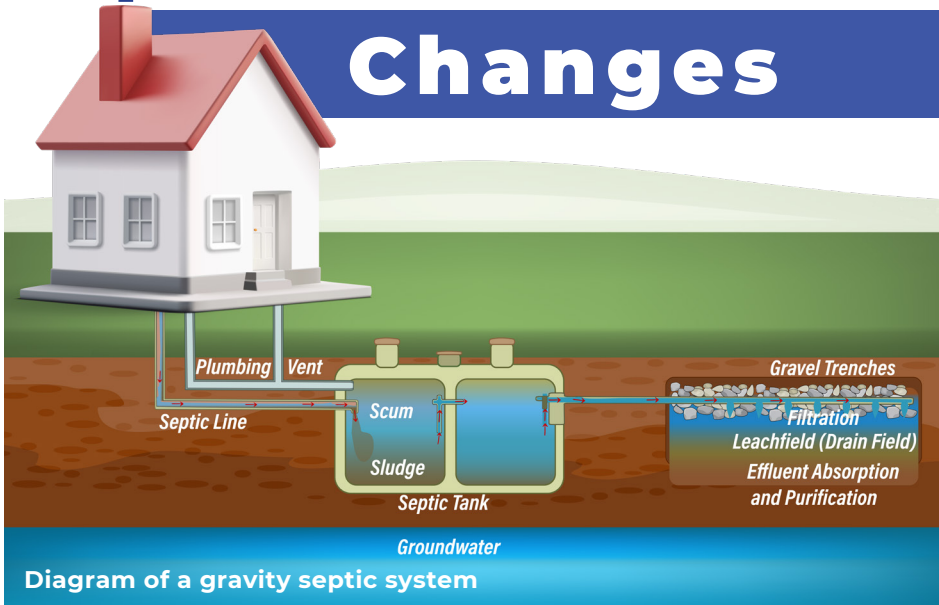




King County

## Changes



In King County, there are about

# 85,000

on-site sewage systems (OSS), commonly known as septic systems.

**Two-thirds** of these are more than 30 years old, which is when we begin to see failures in properly installed and maintained OSS.

King County has updated the codes (rules) for OSS to follow state law and make improvements based on science and feedback from community members and OSS experts.



## What do these changes mean for people with septic systems?

These changes aim to make it easier and cheaper to maintain, repair, and replace septic systems, as well as protect people's health and the environment. The changes impact:

1. Maintenance of existing systems.
2. Construction (design of new and replacement septic systems).
3. Oversight of the septic industry to protect property owners.

## Maintenance

**Goal:** make it easier to complete small fixes to prevent failures & provide more options for addressing a failure. The new codes:

Reduce how often proprietary OSS (super complex septic system like an aerobic treatment unit) need inspections from every 6 months to once a year.

Increase how long an inspection is valid before a property sale to 1 year instead of just 6 months.

Require service providers to screw down tank access lids so kids and pets don't move them – which can cause serious accidents!



## Construction

**Goal:** make it easier to complete small fixes to prevent failures & provide more options for addressing a failure.

The new codes:

Remove the requirement to get a permit for minor repairs like fixing a cracked pipe or replacing a pump.

Provide the option of applying to install a non-conforming septic system instead of connecting to sewer or installing a conforming septic system if your property is in an urban area and your septic system fails.

Remove the fee for service providers to report to King County if they see sewage on the ground or backing up in a house & shorten the required time for the notification from within 30 days to within 5 business days.

**Goal:** apply septic system design and construction requirements consistently across King County. These requirements will impact you if you install a new septic system or submit a building application for an addition or expansion. The new codes:

Clarify that nitrogen treatment is required for septic systems in critical aquifer recharge areas on lots smaller than 1 acre.

Increase the minimum lot size for new subdivisions by 500-1,000 square feet and establish a minimum usable land area requirement.

Allow smaller pressured distribution drainfield areas, making it easier to install a cheaper type of septic system and creating more space for potential property upgrades like building an accessory dwelling unit (ADU).

Define a “bedroom” so that people know which changes can be made with the existing septic system.

Clarify that commercial septic systems need to be evaluated by a septic system designer to make sure it can be used for a new commercial venture.



## Industry Oversight

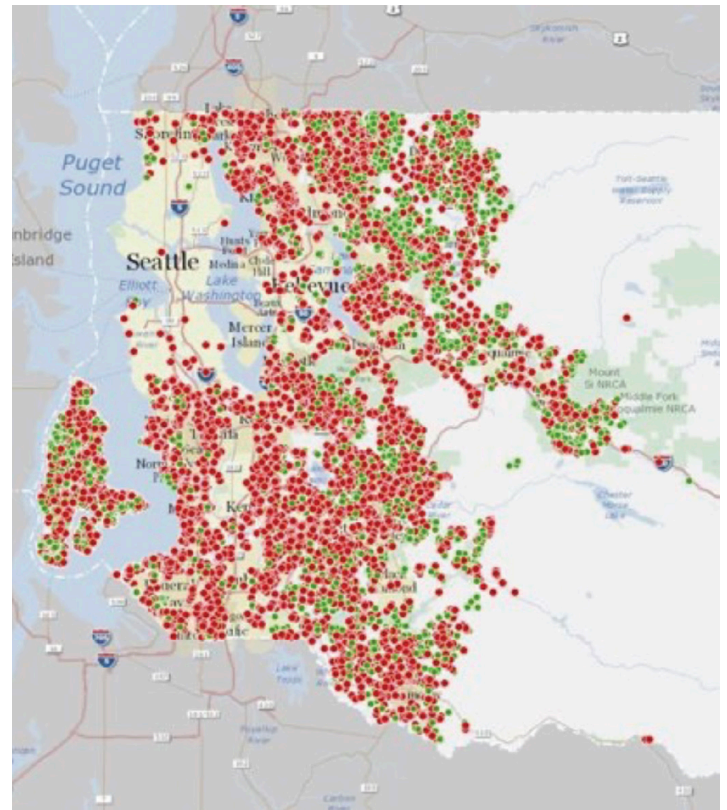
**Goal:** Ensure that service providers are following a Code of Performance and Ethics and providing you a high quality of service. If you are concerned that your service provider may not be getting the necessary permits, requiring you to make changes that are not necessary, or charging for things that were not completed, you can call our office, and we will investigate it.

## What is the timeline?

The code effective date is April 1, 2025. The OSS Program will share more detailed information about the code changes through their newsletter. You can sign up for the newsletter at [www.kingcounty.gov/oss/alerts](http://www.kingcounty.gov/oss/alerts).

## Why did we revise the codes?

Washington State recently updated its OSS codes, so King County needed to make changes to meet the new requirements. The King County OSS Program also used this opportunity to improve the local codes. The codes were last updated in 2008. There have been many technological advances since then, and we have a better understanding of wastewater treatment.



Septic systems in King County. Red circles are older systems that may be vulnerable to failure. Green circles are newer systems.

**Please reach out to us if you have questions!**

King County Septic System Program  
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