Public Health
Seattle & King County

Septic System Inspection Reminder Pilot Program: Additional Detail

Keep your new septic system running at its best

PROTECT ONE OF YOUR HOME'S BIGGEST INVESTMENTS

MAINTENANCE	REPLACE SEPTIC SYSTEM	CONNECT TO SEWER
~$400 once/year Routine inspection & maintenance	**$41,000 – $53,000+** Average replacement cost*	**$25,000 – $84,000+** Depending on sewer availability and funding*

Adapted from The Cost of Addressing Failing Septic Systems in King County: A Wicked Problem at a Point of Crisis, Greene Economics LLC, prepared for Public Health – Seattle & King County (Table ES-1), and 2025 Craft3 loan data for King County. **** Actual costs vary by project, complexity, and location.***

ABOUT THE INSPECTION REMINDER PILOT

Washington State requires routine maintenance inspections to help septic systems keep operating properly and to protect public health and the environment. King County's Inspection Reminder Pilot starts with proprietary systems, since their complexity makes them higher risk.

The first two years after installation matter most. During this window, maintenance providers confirm the system is performing as designed, make adjustments, catch developing issues while the manufacturer's warranty is active, and help you get familiar with your new system.

Starting Fall 2026, owners of newly installed proprietary systems will get courtesy reminders as inspections come due to help you stay on track with state and local requirements and to help protect your warranty by following the manufacturer's recommended schedule.



Pictured: A newly installed drainfield.

SEPTIC MYTH OR FACT?

✕ MYTH	✓ FACT
"If nothing's backing up, my system is fine."	Many problems develop long before you notice any symptoms.
"New septic systems don't need maintenance."	The first two years are some of the most important for inspections. Catching small issues early helps prevent bigger repairs later.
"Maintenance is expensive."	Routine inspections cost far less than major repairs or a full replacement.
"Septic systems last forever."	Every system eventually needs repairs and replacement. Routine maintenance helps maximize its lifespan.

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WHAT TO EXPECT DURING AN INSPECTION

1. Meet your maintainer	2. Inspect components	3. Review performance	4. Recommend maintenance	5. Receive your report

- ✓ Locate and inspect accessible system components
- ✓ Check pumps, alarms, filters, and other treatment equipment (as applicable)
- ✓ Verify the system is operating as designed
- ✓ Perform routine maintenance, such as cleaning filters or making minor adjustments
- ✓ Document findings and provide a maintenance report
- ✓ Discuss any recommended repairs or follow-up actions with you

Good news: most inspections don't involve digging. Routine inspections focus on your system's accessible components and usually don't disturb your lawn, landscaping, or driveway. If a repair needs excavation, your provider will walk you through the options before any work begins.

DID YOU KNOW?

Every septic system will eventually need repairs and replacement.	**Most septic systems last about 30–50 years.**	**Routine maintenance is the best way to maximize your system's life.**	**Problems caught early are almost always less expensive to fix.**

EVERY HOME SYSTEM LASTS LONGER WITH ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Your septic system works hard every day. Give it the same care you'd give any other essential home system.

ROOF	HVAC	VEHICLE	SEPTIC SYSTEM
Inspect every 1–2 years ☑	*Serviced 1–2x per year* ☑	*Regular oil changes* ☑	*Routine inspections* ☑

WHY THESE SYSTEMS

Proprietary systems are more complex than conventional septic systems. They're typically installed in environmentally sensitive areas or on properties where the soil can't fully treat wastewater on its own. These systems use multiple components, often including an aerator, to pre-treat wastewater before it's dispersed into the soil.

The first two years matter most: maintenance providers confirm the system works as designed, make adjustments, and catch component issues early, while helping you learn your new system. This program

currently focuses on proprietary systems because of their complexity, with plans to expand to other high-risk systems over time.

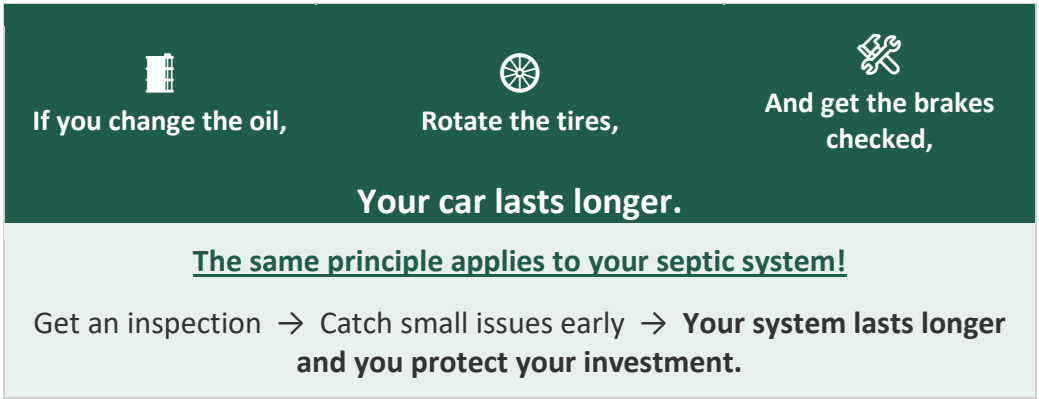
CONVENTIONAL SYSTEM	ADVANCED TREATMENT SYSTEM
Fewer mechanical components	Multiple pumps, blowers, filters, and controls
Simpler operation	More sophisticated treatment process
Routine inspections still important	Early inspections especially important

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

New system installed → **6-month inspection** → **12-month inspection** → **18-month inspection** → **24-month inspection**

After year two: **annual** inspections continue, unless a different frequency is specified for your system.

KINDA LIKE OWNING A VEHICLE



WHO TO CALL

Your maintainer will be in the O&M contract included with your as-built. If you need a copy, use our Septic & Group B records tool, enter your address or parcel number, and your as-built will be linked on the left. You can also call us at (206) 477-8050, and we'll happily point you in the right direction.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MAINTAINER

Asking questions helps you make informed decisions about your investment. Take an active role in your system's health, here are a few questions to get you started:

- Can I schedule all four inspections for the next 2 years in advance?
- Can I be there for the inspection?
- What does a typical inspection include?
- Are you able to make repairs if you find issues? Will that have a cost?
- Are any components or parts covered by warranty?

- Have you seen signs that our water use is running high?
- How often should I get inspections after the first two years?

LINKED RESOURCES

Septic System Homeowner's Manual

Property Records

Septic System Professionals

Financial Assistance

BE YOUR OWN SEPTIC EXPERT

One of the best things you can do for your system is to get familiar with your as-built record. It shows what kind of system you have and where it sits on your property. If you don't know your as-built, you risk landscaping, driving, or building over your septic system or reserve area, which can damage the system's functionality and can lead to delayed application response if corrections are needed.

Learn more about water conservation, what to avoid putting down the drain, and other ways to keep your system in top form: About Septic Systems.

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT FOR YEARS TO COME

Most septic systems don't fail overnight. Components wear out, pumps age, and filters clog gradually. Regular maintenance catches these issues early, when they're simpler and less expensive to fix.

After the first two years, inspections move to once a year (per BOH Title 13) rather than every 6 months, but maintenance still matters. Check whether you're eligible for a maintenance rebate if you're past the initial two years.

CHECK YOUR MAINTENANCE HEALTH

AT RISK	ON THE RIGHT TRACK	WELL MAINTAINED
Missed inspections → higher chance of unexpected repairs	**Occasional inspections → better awareness**	**Routine inspections → best opportunity to maximize the system's life**

IN SUMMARY: INSPECTIONS MATTER!

Protect your home
Your septic system is one of the most valuable systems on your property.

Save money
Small repairs are almost always less expensive than responding to a failure.

Protect water quality
Healthy septic systems help protect local water and the Puget Sound.

Make it last longer
Routine maintenance helps maximize the life of your system.