



Memorandum

TO: SATPAL SIDHU, COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FROM: Hayli Hruza, OSS & Drinking Water Supervisor
DATE: JANUARY 29, 2025
RE: WCC CH 24.05 ONSITE SEWAGE CODE

In response to updates in Washington State Department of Health OSS regulations (March 2024), Whatcom County Health and Community Services (WCHCS) has reviewed and updated the local OSS code (WCC 24.05) to align with new state standards and local needs. The proposed changes reflect best practices in septic system management and involve input from local stakeholders.

Process Timeline:

- **March - August 2024:** WCHCS reviewed state regulatory changes with WCC 24.05.
- **August - October 2024:** WCHCS convened a local Technical Advisory Group of OSS professionals to help assess proposed changes for alignment with local needs and best practices.
- **November - December 2024:** WCHCS shared proposed changes with community groups (Realtors Association, BIA, restaurant owners, Shellfish Advisory Committees). Feedback emphasized the need to clarify requirements around expansions and remodeling, and feedback was incorporated in the final ordinance drafting, where possible.
- **April 2025:** Washington State WAC changes go into effect

Key Changes to Whatcom County Code (WCC 24.05):

Topic	Summary	Sections Impacted
Soil Log Requirements	Requires more comprehensive soil logs for subdivisions and developments to ensure accurate representation of soil quality in the drain field area.	24.05.360



Topic	Summary	Sections Impacted
Homeowner Installation Exemption	Introduces a requirement for a homeowner exemption packet for self-installations, ensuring homeowners meet the same standards as professionals.	24.05.250
Licensing and Continuing Education	Reduces continuing education credits required for OSS specialists, installers, and pumpers from 3 to 1 annually. Adds a deadline for septage reporting.	24.05.380
Restaurant Flow and Waste Strength Sampling	Requires restaurants with complex OSS to sample sewage flow and waste strength to ensure systems are functioning properly.	24.05.290
Tank-Only Permits	Tank-only permits must be connected to a permitted drain field. If the drain field isn't permitted, it must be replaced as well in the case of a failing OSS.	24.05.160
Application expirations	Applications will expire in one year if no further action is taken by the applicant.	24.05.160
Site Plan Design Requirements	Adds additional elements to site plans, such as setbacks from gradient markers, wells, water meter lines, and surface water to ensure proper installation and functionality of OSS.	24.05.160

These updates are essential to ensure the county's OSS systems are effective, compliant with state regulations, and responsive to local needs.

For any questions, please contact Hayli Hruza at 360-778-6074.