

Frequently Asked Questions: Existing System Evaluation Report Form and Inspections



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Water Quality Onsite Program

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1. **Question:** Who is allowed to perform existing system evaluations, also called septic system inspections?

Answer: Only certified individuals that have experience performing inspections are allowed to perform existing system evaluations.

Accepted certifications listed in OAR 340-071-0155: licensed and certified septic system installer, certified maintenance provider, registered environmental health specialist, licensed professional engineer, NAWT certified inspector, or other professional certification approved in writing by DEQ.

Note: Licensed pumpers are not allowed to perform existing system evaluations unless they also have one of the certifications listed above.

2. **Question:** When is the [ESER form](#) used?

Answer: The ESER form must be used every time an existing system evaluation, also called septic system inspection, is performed.

3. **Question:** Who is supposed to use the ESER form?

Answer: Any person performing an existing system evaluation must use the DEQ-approved ESER form. This includes Installers, Maintenance Providers, NAWT Certified Inspectors, Environmental Health Specialists, Professional Engineers, County agents and DEQ agents.

4. **Question:** I am a Certified NAWT Inspector. Can I use the NAWT inspection form to report results from an inspection?

Answer: No. You must use the DEQ-approved ESER form to report inspection results. The ESER form is specific to systems used in Oregon and technical terms commonly used in Oregon.

5. **Question:** I am a Maintenance Provider and have O&M contracts for ATT's, sand filters, pressure distribution and re-circulating gravel filter systems. Do I use the ESER form when providing service and maintenance to these systems as part of an annual service maintenance contract?

Answer: No. The ESER form is *not* used for service and maintenance performed as part of an annual service maintenance contract.

6. **Question:** I meet the qualifications needed to perform Existing System Evaluations. Where do I sign-up as an Oregon Septic Smart Inspector?

Answer: Sign-up as an Inspector through the [Oregon Septic Smart Pro](#) website

7. **Question:** Where can I find a list of Oregon Septic Smart Inspectors?

Answer: Find a list of certified and approved Inspectors on the [Oregon Septic Smart Home](#) website.

8. **Question:** I hired an Inspector to inspect my septic system. Should I be there when the inspection is being performed?

Answer: The DEQ recommends that you be present during the septic system inspection. If you have any questions about the information reported to you on the ESER form you can immediately ask the Inspector for clarification.

9. **Question:** I do not want to have my septic tank pumped, but the Inspector told me they would not be able to inspect the septic tank if it was not pumped. Why?

Answer: DEQ recommends having your septic tank pumped so the tank can be properly inspected. The Inspector will not be able to see all of the tank components if the tank is full of solids, scum and wastewater. The Inspector has to write down that you declined to have your tank pumped if you decide not to have this service.

10. **Question:** I want to have my septic tank inspected, but I do not want a full septic system inspection. Who is allowed to perform this service and what form do they use to report the findings?

Answer: The requirements for septic tank inspection are the same: only those individuals described in #1 above are allowed to perform this service. The Inspector must use the ESER form to report the findings of the septic tank inspection, and they must also write down why the other sections of the ESER form were not completed.

11. **Question:** I want to have a records review (permit, maintenance records, etc), but I do not want a full septic system inspection. Who is allowed to perform this service and what form do they use to report the findings?

Answer: The requirements for a records review are the same: only those individuals described in #1 above are allowed to perform this service. The system owner can compile and provide the records to an Inspector, but the Inspector must use the ESER form to report the findings of the records review. The Inspector must also write down on the ESER form why the other sections of the ESER form were not completed.

12. **Question:** I got an estimate for a septic system inspection, and it costs more than what I paid for a tank pumping and inspection last time. Why does it cost more?

Answer: The ESER form reflects the new standard for performing septic system inspections. The cost of an inspection will account for the work entailed in completing the ESER form.

13. **Question:** Do I need to submit a copy of a completed ESER form to DEQ?

Answer: No, you do not need to submit a copy of a completed ESER form to DEQ. After an inspection, the Inspector will provide a completed ESER form to the client that ordered the inspection.



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