

What you need to know about the Rhode Island Septic System Functional Inspection Report

By:

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Are you buying or selling your home and think the Rhode Island Septic System Functional Inspection Report is confusing? Are you replacing a failed or aging septic system and want to know what the inspector is going to look for when they show up? Do you want to learn about the inspection before starting a new septic project? These are excellent questions every person dealing with septic issues should ask. Al Rivet of All Clear Septic has provided the answers to these questions and more in this in-depth analysis of the Functional Report.

The Septic System Functional Report form is found in the Rhode Island Handbook for Inspection, starting on page 109. The form is placed after extremely detailed instructions on how to perform the inspection, which is reviewed in this document. The document can be found at <http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/water/isdsbook.pdf>.

The report begins with the inspection date, client information and inspector information. The client's name is required as the client in some cases may not be the homeowner, but the new buyer. There is a very important notice next, which Al goes into at length, regarding the inspection execution time. The inspection "...is in no way a guarantee or warranty of future performance". This notice reminds the client and inspector that the report is for the current state of the septic system being inspected ONLY, and does not assure anyone of future performance of the system. The inspection form also does not cover any portions of the system which are concealed or not visible to the inspector.

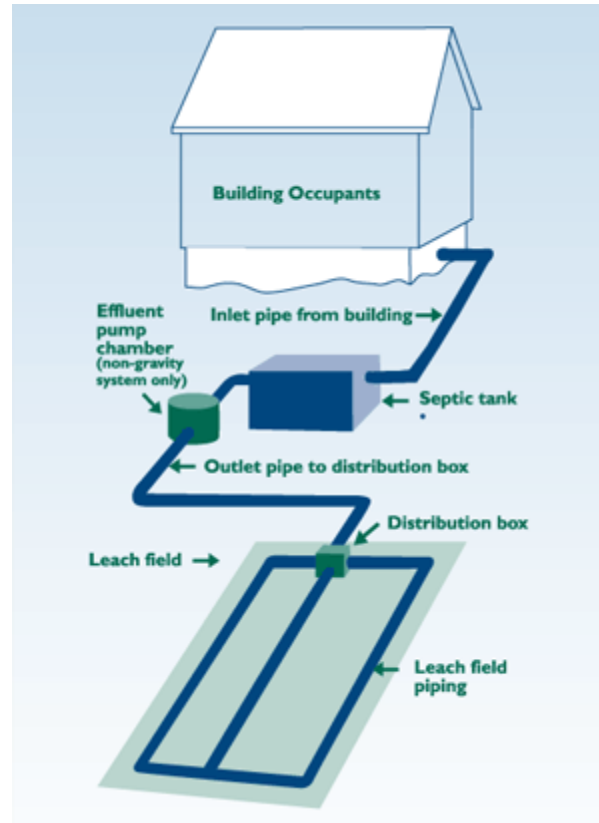
The second portion of the report, which is detailed at length in chapter 2 of the guide, is a checklist of information that should be readily available to the inspector. The inspector assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the records provided to them. The property owner is required to provide the records to the inspector, with a checklist for each type of record and its completeness as a part of the report. It first requires the application for septic system construction, which may not be available for anything prior to 1968. Use records and maintenance records are also reviewed as part of this review. The final sets of records include the occupancy of the property and the plat and lot number to ensure the address matches local assessor's records.

The In-Home plumbing evaluation portion of the report, detailed in chapter 3, is based on information provided by the homeowner. The first section is a detail of the wastewater routing, which shows how many sinks, showers, toilets or other wastewater plumbing in the house and validates they all go to the septic system. The use records are detailed next which is listed as gallons per day with indications of the inspector's opinion if it is excessive or not. It also asks for the occupancy of the

property to ensure the system is large enough to handle the number of people living at the residence. Lastly it asks about a garbage disposal, as some systems were not designed for them.

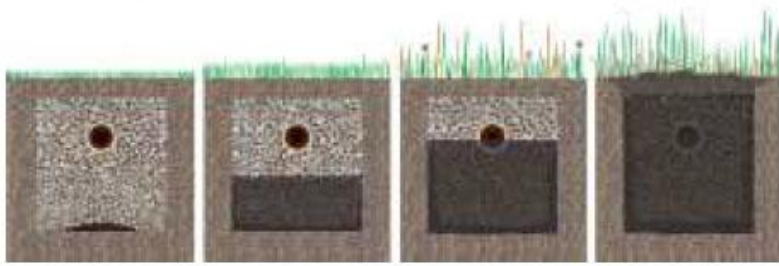
The System Component Evaluation system is next, detailing the exact design and construction of the septic system. It begins asking about the type of system, a cesspool, conventional septic system or some other innovative or modern technology. The construction materials are then detailed along with accessories or any other components like a pump or filter. A diagram is then added to the report so the system can be located easily without having to excavate extensively. The location of the tank covers are noted and if they are at or below grade, as well as the locations of the distribution box and soil absorption system. Measurements are taken from visible landmarks to ensure the system can be found easily.

If the system being inspected is a cesspool or septic tank, there are separate considerations above the ones noted in the previous section. The inspector will look for any structural damage, overflow, outlets or any other spillage for both types. The inspector may do a dye test to ensure the cesspool is the final destination of all flow, or if there is a separate destination for laundry for instance. This will also help identify any hidden structures that may be a part of the system. In the case of a septic tank, the levels of the solids, scum or sludge are measured and noted. Dye tests also are used in the case of a septic tank, but the flow tests detailed in the report are generally not used as All Clear has equipment which often supersedes flow tests, as well as a sewer camera to check the condition of pipes and components. There is a solids chart listed next, with recommendations for each case listed which may include pumping at the time of inspection.



Example Septic System

Detailed next are site observations by the inspector, which add more information to ascertain the health of the septic system being inspected. First is a check for impermeable concrete, asphalt or



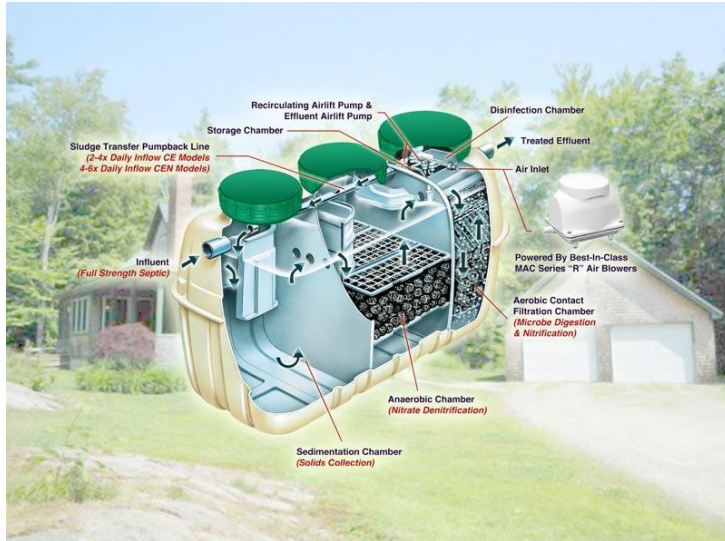
Progressive build up of organic matter in leach field and subsequent hydraulic failure

brick structures built over the soil absorption system, which may impact the ability to access the system or cause stress to the function of the system. The observance or odors, leakage, burnt grass or stained grown or overly lush vegetation in the area of the

soil absorption system is listed which may indicate a failed system. Checks for large plants or trees, large or heavy objects, pumps or drains near the system is done to identify any conditions which may damage the system. Last is a check for a cave in or exposed component which is normally not seen, which indicates a potential issue with the system or dangerous situation.

Flow and dye tests are listed next, which have been discussed previously. Flow tests are generally not conducted by All-Clear Septic. Dye tests are conducted to establish destination of flow into the system, from a washing machine for instance in case the inspector does not believe it flows into the septic system. The inspector uses a sewer camera to inspect the pipes and system components, and can do exploratory excavation with a mini-excavator if needed.

The Results & Recommendations system is next, which shows the inspectors opinion of the system as a whole and recommendations if needed. The inspector has many options listed, first being the system is functioning properly. The system may be noted as substandard or has components which are substandard which may need updating or corrections. The instruction may find damage to the structure of the system which are to be listed in the comments area. The inspector's opinion of the soil absorption system being overwhelmed or the need for maintenance is listed, a leak or some condition which may lead to an inconclusive result is listed as well. The comments area will detail any information needed to clarify the results. The system pumping records are reviewed and indicate when the system was last pumped.



New anaerobic septic tank system

The next section indicates the inspector's recommendations for the system. It could need further evaluation for repair or upgrade. An evaluation by a licensed plumber is listed next, which may be recommended by the inspector for a number of reasons in case of a failure or damaged components in the home or building. The inspector may recommend pumping of the system and further inspection should the system not be in a state where it can be properly

inspected at the time of inspection. The inspector also notes the interval for maintenance in years and when the next check should be, and if it needs further evaluation before the next inspection.

The final page of the form details several charts which are used to determine standard inspection schedules based on occupancy and usage, and the location for the final inspectors name and signature. These charts take into account current measures of solids in the tank, when it was last pumped and the size of the tank. The inspector can adjust the schedule based on the condition of the components in the system and their age. Finally the inspector will sign and print their name on the inspection form.



If you as the owner of a system need to have this type of inspection performed, call All Clear Septic & Wastewater Services for prompt and professional service. All Clear Septic and Wastewater is certified to provide inspection services in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. We have earned a solid reputation within the community for providing honest and thorough inspections. We have even been called upon to provide a second opinion or a confidential voluntary assessment for the homebuyer. When you need help with your septic system or want your new home's septic inspected, contact All Clear Septic & Wastewater Services at 508-763-4431 or info@allclearseptic.com!

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