



**ST. JOSEPH COUNTY**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## St. Joseph County Department of Health

*"To promote health and wellness with compassion and integrity through partnerships, education, protection, and advocacy for all who reside in and visit St. Joseph County."*

### Variance Appendix A

May 14, 2024

**Connection to Sewer:** Sewer connection is encouraged whenever practical, economical, or in the interest of public health. If there is sanitary sewer available adjacent to the property, the property owner is to connect to it when the existing septic system fails. If the parcel in question is new construction, they are expected to connect in lieu of an onsite sewage system. All being said, there is available the option to request a waiver from this connection requirement. Decisions based on whether to grant the waiver or not are based on the costs involved and if there is a compelling public health reason to do so.

**Reconnection to OSS:** In the event of a catastrophic event (such as a burndown), the Department of Health asks for an inspection of the existing septic system and soil borings where the septic is. There have been instances where the fire trucks have driven over the septic field and crushed the distribution box. This inspection makes sure that the new house will have a functioning septic system. The soil borings are to ensure that the system is appropriately sized and is not discharging sewage into the groundwater. The Department of Health is not going to deny any permits for a lot in which a rebuilt structure is going to be erected, even conceding to replacement system standards with best judgement to make sure a septic system can be placed on the lot.

**Installer Registration and Certification:** Being that installer registration and certification is not mentioned in 410 IAC 6-8.3, St. Joseph County Code 51 is not being more strict than state rule by requiring it. St. Joseph County has required certification and registration for years. St. Joseph County offers septic installer and inspector tests for free to any interested parties, and the tests are multiple choice and open book. Test takers are allotted 4 hours to take our test. St. Joseph County has recognized IOWPA and accepted IOWPA testing requirements in lieu of local testing. Registration of the contractor has also allowed the SJCDoH to have a list ready and available to the public for when they are looking for a contractor. The SJCDoH has been in the unfortunate position of having to pull a bond before, and has come close to doing so multiple times in the past few years in order to get situations rectified.

**Application requirements:** The application requirements for septic permits are just an explanation of proper procedure to ensure that septic designs can be reviewed in their entirety without delay. Well radii, property lines, and other lot features are all relevant to ensuring the proposed septic system is in line with state rule requirements. Floorplans are also required for the processing of new construction permits. Full blueprints are NOT required. The Department of Health had a problem with receiving applications for 3 bedroom homes that ended up being 4 or 5, and that has almost ceased since we started requiring floorplans in 2018.

Please send all electronic correspondence for the Environmental Health Division to [envirohd@sjcindiana.com](mailto:envirohd@sjcindiana.com)

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Enforcement: As that Rule 410 does not include language regarding enforcement, the language in County Code 51 is not more strict than state code.

Construction Inspections: The Department of Health does ask for hold points during system installation so that inspections can be performed to verify code compliance.

Subsurface drainage type/depth/size: Clarifies that interceptor drains are supposed to flank the SAF of both sides to outlet.

Other: St. Joseph County requires sanitary tee in distribution boxes that do not have built-in baffles. Vented 90s are not allowed, as there has been documentation that the vent holes can become closed up due to scum and flood dosed systems have jetted effluent directly into a header from the vent hole. Additionally, St. Joseph County requires ASTM-D 2665 or equivalent as minimum pipe specifications from the house to 5' beyond the distribution box in the headers. The upgrade from SDR 35 is due to the excessive flexibility and aptitude for deformation. With St. Joseph County largely having sandy soils that can cause excessive settling, the extra rigidity of Schedule 40 piping helps ensure that the lines will have proper slope and distribution boxes don't settle as badly.

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