

Guide to Sewerage Systems for Home Renovations

The Sewerage System Regulation under the Public Health Act governs all on-site sewerage systems in British Columbia. As a homeowner, it is your responsibility to ensure that your system aligns with your renovation plans and is duly documented with Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). Records of legally installed sewerage systems, dating back to the 1970s, are maintained by VCH. It's imperative for homeowners to retain these legal documents when they are issued or transferred with land title.

As per the Sewerage System Regulation, only an "Authorized Person" is allowed to install, repair, and maintain a sewerage system. Registered On-site Wastewater Practitioners (ROWPs, pronounced "rope") or Professional Engineers (P. Eng) are qualified individuals who meet the Regulation's requirements. Here are specific scenarios related to renovations and sewerage systems, along with recommended steps:

1. **Renovation without increasing occupancy:**

If your renovation doesn't increase the occupancy limit or add bedrooms according to the building permit or plans, generally, no sewerage system upgrade is required.

2. **Adding bedrooms to existing home:**

When adding bedrooms to your existing home, you must consider the impact on your sewerage system. The initial installation by a ROWP or P. Eng considered factors like occupants, bedrooms, plumbing fixtures, and treatment technology. If your system was legally installed, a sewerage filing would exist. If you can't locate it, contact your local environmental health office (a \$25.00 fee applies).

The original sewerage filing may include details like system size, location, and professional drawings. If it explicitly states the designed number of bedrooms, you can assess its capacity for additional bedrooms. If no bedroom information is available, the determination becomes challenging.

Example: If the original filing indicates a design for a six-bedroom home, while your current home has four bedrooms, the system may support up to two more bedrooms. However, confirmation through a ROWP or P. Eng assessment is strongly recommended. Note that this capacity does not extend to supporting a separate two-bedroom dwelling. **Note: For systems over 20 years old, an assessment by a ROWP or P.Eng is advisable regardless.**



3. Determining system suitability without a filing:

If there is no record of your system with VCH, an on-site investigation and assessment by a ROWP or P. Eng are necessary to determine its adequacy. The professional will manually locate your system, size the tank, estimate distribution field size, and produce a stamped report.

4. Inadequate existing system for proposed renovation:

For significant alterations, repairs, and new builds, a ROWP or P. Eng is legally required to complete the work. The authorized person will submit a new filing (Record of Sewerage System) with VCH.

5. Second dwelling on property:

Generally, a second dwelling will require its own sewerage system. In rare cases, it may be able to tie into the existing system if sufficient capacity exists. A ROWP or P. Eng assessment of the existing system is required to make this determination.

To find a Registered On-site Wastewater Practitioner contact:

Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC - Onsite Wastewater Registration Program

Phone: (604) 585-2788 ext. 238

<https://owrp.asttbc.org/rowp-finder/>

To find a Professional Engineer contact:

Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC)

Phone: 1-888-430-8035

<https://www.egbc.ca/Member-Directories/Professionals-for-Sewerage-System-Regulation>

To contact VCH Environmental Health Protection, please e-mail environmental.health@vch.ca or call your local environmental health office:

- Central Coast (604) 983-6793
- North Shore (604) 983-6793
- Powell River (604) 485-3310
- Richmond (604) 233-3147
- Sechelt (604) 885-5164
- Squamish (604) 892-2293
- Vancouver (604) 675-3800
- Whistler (604) 932-3202