



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Manual for On-Site Sewage Management Systems

SECTION N | CERTIFICATION

Environmental Health Section

SECTION N - CERTIFICATION

1) Preface

The Rules of The Department of Public Health, Chapter 511-3-1, provides for the certification and de-certification of septic tank installers, pumpers, maintenance personnel, inspection personnel, and soil scientists. This section establishes standards for these individuals.

2) Definitions

- A. **“Certified Level 1 Inspector”**- means an individual who is currently employed by a local board of health; has satisfied the Department’s certification requirements, and performs inspections of onsite sewage management systems.
- B. **“Certified Level 2 Inspector”**- means an individual who is currently employed with a local County Board of Health; has satisfied the Department’s certification requirements, and conducts site evaluations and issue construction permits for the installation and repair of onsite sewage management systems.
- C. **“Certified Septic Tank Installer”** - means an individual who has satisfied the Department’s certification requirements and is engaged in the installation, repair or modification of onsite sewage management systems.
- D. **“Certified Septic Tank Pumper”** - means an individual who has satisfied the Department’s certification requirements and is engaged in the removal, transport and final disposal of septage from onsite sewage management systems.
- E. **“Certified Maintenance Contractor”** - means an individual who has met the Department’s certification requirements and is engaged in the maintenance, routine inspection, evaluation of onsite sewage management systems or advanced treatment units.
- F. **“Certified Septic Tank Company”** - means a business entity (sole proprietorship, corporation limited liability company, or partnership) that is certified by the Department and which employs at least one Department Certified Septic Installer, Pumper or Maintenance Contractor.
- G. **“Registered Engineer/Geologist”** - means an individual who holds a valid certificate of registration as a Registered Geologist issued pursuant to Chapter 19 of Title 43, or who hold a valid certificate of registration as a professional engineer issued pursuant to Chapter 15 of Title 43.
- H. **“Certified Soil Classifier”** - means a person who has been approved by the Department to conduct soil evaluations to determine suitability of a site for an onsite sewage management system.
- I. **“Soil Scientist”** - means a person certified by the Department to perform soil evaluations to conduct soil evaluations to determine suitability of a site for onsite sewage management system.

3) Basic Requirements for Initial Certification

- A. Must be at least 18 years of age for Septic Installers, Pumpers and Maintenance Contractors.
- B. Must be at least 21 years of age for Soil Scientists, Registered Engineers and Geologists.
- C. Must not have illegally performed any activities related to the onsite sewage industry within the prior two (2) years of applying for certification.
- D. Must pass all applicable exams, as determined by the Department.
- E. Must pay all applicable fees as determined by the Department.
- F. Must submit a completed application.

4) Additional Certification Requirements

A. *Installers, Pumpers and Maintenance Contractors:*

1. Installers must be employed by a Department Certified Septic Tank Company that has paid all applicable fees, submitted all required documents, and is in good standing.
2. A minimum of 70% correct responses on applicable exams is required for certification.

B. *Certified Soil Classifier In-Training:*

1. Must hold at least a Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited college or university with a major in agronomy, soil science or related field of science, as approved by the Soil Classifiers Certification Advisory Committee.
2. Must complete a minimum of 30 semester credit hours or equivalent quarter hours in the biological, physical, chemical, or earth sciences with a minimum of 15 semester hours or equivalent quarter hours in approved soil science courses meeting the following distribution:
 - a. A minimum of one course in soil classification, morphology, genesis, and mapping,
 - b. The remaining soil course credits must be in at least three of the following eight categories: introductory soil science, soil fertility, soil microbiology, soil chemistry, soil physics, soil management, soil and land use or soils and the environment, soil mineralogy; or a three-credit maximum in one of the following areas, independent study, geology, or hydrology.
3. Must pass a written examination administered or approved by the Soil Classifiers Certification Advisory Committee.
4. Must work under the direct supervision of a Certified Soil Classifier.

C. *Certified Soil Scientists:*

1. Must hold at least a Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited college or university with a major in agronomy, soil science, or a related field of science, as approved by the Soil Classifiers Certification Advisory Committee.
2. Must complete a minimum of 30 semester credit hours or equivalent quarter hours in the biological, physical, chemical, or earth sciences with a minimum of 15 semester

hours or equivalent quarter hours in approved soil science courses meeting the following distribution:

- a. A minimum of one course in soil classification, morphology, genesis and mapping.
 - b. The remaining soil course credits must be in at least three of the following eight categories: introductory soil science, soil fertility, soil microbiology, soil chemistry, soil physics, soil management, soil and land use or soils and the environment, soil mineralogy, or a three-credit maximum in independent study, geology, or hydrology.
3. Has at least four years of verifiable full-time or equivalent part-time experience. Two years of such experience, as determined by the department's soil classifiers advisory committee, shall have been obtained after meeting all the educational requirements of this section under the supervision of a soil classifier who has met the education and experience requirements provided in this section and shall have been spent actively mapping, identifying, and classifying soil features and interpreting the influence of soil features on soil uses, including, but not limited to, conducting soil investigations for determining the suitability of sites for on-site sewage management systems as approved by the department's soil classifiers advisory committee. The remaining two years of such experience, as determined by the department's soil classifiers advisory, shall have occurred prior to, during, or after meeting all the educational requirements of this section and shall have included the utilization of soil science concepts and techniques in mapping, identifying, and classifying soil features and interpreting the influence of soil features on soil uses, including, but not limited to, conducting soil investigations for determining the suitability of sites for on-site sewage management systems as approved by the department's soil classifiers advisory committee.
4. Must successfully complete a written soil science examination as required by the Department's Soil Classifier Certification Advisory Committee.
5. Must pass the Department's Rules and Regulations Exam for Soil Classifiers with a minimum score of 70% correct responses.
6. Must successfully pass a field examination pertaining to soil classification, soil mapping and soil interpretations for on-site sewage management systems.
7. Must submit evidence of current "errors and omissions" insurance or other comparable indemnification in the amount of one million dollars (\$1,000,000). Insurance must always be maintained or the Department's approval to perform soil evaluations is immediately revoked.

D. Registered Geologists/Engineers:

1. Maintain registration as a Registered Geologist or engineer in the state of Georgia pursuant to O.C.G.A. Title 43, Chapters 15 and 19. Registrations must always be current or Department approval is immediately revoked.
2. Professional engineers must demonstrate competency in the area of soil classification as it relates to onsite sewage management systems.

3. Successful completion of at least 3 semester hours (or equivalent) of college courses related specifically to soils classification and suitability of sites for on-site sewage management systems.
4. Must submit evidence of current “professional liability” insurance or other comparable indemnification in the amount of one million dollars (\$1,000,000). Insurance must always be maintained or the Department’s approval to perform soil evaluations is immediately revoked.
5. Must successfully complete a written soil science examination as required by the Department’s Soil Classifier Certification Advisory Committee.
6. Must pass the Department’s Rules and Regulations Exam for Soil Classifiers with a minimum score of 70% correct responses.
7. Must successfully pass a field examination pertaining to soil classification, soil mapping and soil interpretations for on-site sewage management systems.

E. *Certified Level 1 Inspector:*

1. Must be employed in good standing in an environmental health program of the Department or County Board of Health as an Environmental Health Specialist 1 or higher.
2. Must complete fifty (50) onsite sewage management system evaluations under the supervision of a certified Level 1 Inspector, or have at least 3 months of work experience in the onsite sewage management program
3. Must submit written approval from the District Environmental Health Director stating the individual has demonstrated proficiency in field inspection activities, including the identification of basic soil hydraulic features and the use of evaluation equipment.
4. Must pass all of the Contractor Certification Level Exams, including the septic tank pumper and portable sanitation contractor examinations with a minimum of 80 % correct responses.

F. *Certified Level 2 Inspector:*

1. Must have completed the Department’s Level 1 Inspection Personnel certification requirements.
2. Must successfully complete the Department’s Onsite Sewage Management Systems Training Class.
3. Must have three (3) months of related work experience as a Level 1 Certified Inspector.
4. Must successfully complete the Department’s Level 2 Soil Certification Training Class.

G. *Exclusion (s)* - Individuals are excluded from having to meet the requirement of ownership or employment with a certified contractor company if:

1. They are employed by a local municipality or governmental entity that perform installations, repairs or relocates onsite sewage management systems under their jurisdiction.
2. A homeowner installing a conventional onsite sewage management system at their primary residence.

5) Requirements for Renewal Certification

- A. Certification must be renewed every 2 years based on a standard date established by the Department.
- B. If certification expiration is longer than two (2) years, the applicant must re-take and pass applicable exams.
- C. Must show ownership or proof of employment with a certified septic tank company, health authority, or Certified Soil Classifier.
- D. Must have no unresolved disciplinary action outstanding.
- E. Must satisfy the Department's review of all complaints and judgments received.
- F. Must not have committed any illegal installation or maintenance activities related to the onsite sewage industry during the non-certified period (either non-renewal or decertified).
- G. Must submit evidence of completion of Department approved continuing education:
 - 1. Installers - 8 hours
 - 2. Pumpers and Maintenance Contractors - 6 hours
 - 3. Soil Scientists – 40 hours
 - 4. Inspection Personnel – 8 hours
- H. Special Note for Inspection Personnel:

In accordance with State Law O.C.G.A. 31-3-11 (b), "each employee of a County Board of Health whose duties include enforcing those environmental health regulations of that board of health relating to septic tanks or individual sewage management systems shall be subject to the direction and supervision of the district director of environmental health, although the hiring and termination from employment of such employee shall be subject to the director of that County Board of Health. The employment activities of such employee with regard to environmental health shall be reported to the director of environmental health through the district director of environmental health at least quarterly. The director of environmental health may recommend to that director of that County Board of Health personnel actions, including but not limited to termination, which the director of environmental health deems appropriate for such employee's failure or refusal to comply with the direction of the director of environmental health in the carrying out of the environmental health employment duties of such employee".

6) Certification Exams

Certification will be granted to those individuals who successfully complete the written or oral examinations and who comply with all requirements established by the Department. The examinations will be developed by the Department, with the assistance of the Certification Review Committee, and will be structured as a series of modules. The basic residential module will be composed of questions about "conventional on-site sewage management systems" as defined in the current rules of the Department and this Manual. Additional modules (commercial, drip and area fill mound) will address each of a variety of alternative sewage disposal methods currently exist or will be developed in the future. It is recognized that such

systems are typically complex in nature and vary significantly in installation from conventional system design. A commercial certification is required for contractors installing a system designed for a flow of 2,000 gallons per day or more. Certification will indicate all types of systems for which successful testing has been accomplished.

7) Certification Fees

- A. A \$50 per examination fee will be required of those individuals who wish to become a certified contractor.
- B. A \$400.00 company certification fee will be required every two years based on a standard renewal date as established by the Department.
- C. Company certification fee for new companies during the 2nd year of the renewal period will be the pro-rated amount of \$200.00.
- D. A \$100.00 late fee will be required for companies renewing after the Department's deadline.
- E. There is a \$35.00 fee for returned checks and /or re-issuance of a certification card.
- F. Soil Scientist Fees - A \$100 application processing/examination fee will be required of those persons who wish to be considered for certification in the on-site sewage management program. A \$400 certification fee will be required every two years based on a standard renewal date as established by the Department.

8) Establishment of the Certification Review Committee

There shall be established a Certification Review Committee that assists the Department with certification, recertification and decertification of all individuals required to be certified under 511-3-1 with the exception of Soil Classifiers. The Certification Review Committee shall be composed of two individuals from the state environmental health program, one district environmentalist, one county environmentalist, two individuals who are certified under the "Septic Tank Contractor, or Sewage Pumper" sections of this chapter and three consumer advocates appointed by the Department.

The Committee, will assist the Department with the following:

- A. Developing and revising certification exams;
- B. Reviewing complaints against individuals and companies;
- C. Recommending decertification of those individuals and companies who fail to adhere to the standards for certification established in this section;
- D. Reviewing the content of educational programs and events and recommending appropriate continuing education credit at the request of the Department;
- E. Reviewing the established criteria for certification in the assigned specialties;
- F. Performing such other activities as would be appropriate to manage the continued operation of the certification effort.

9) Establishment of the Soil Classifiers' Certification Advisory Committee

The Department shall appoint nine individuals from the following professional disciplines who will oversee the certification of “Soil Classifiers”. This body shall be known as the “Soil Classifiers’ Certification Advisory Committee”. It shall be comprised of three environmentalists employed in the environmental health program of County Boards of Health or the Department of Public Health (county, district and state), one currently certified soil scientist, two soil scientists from academia, a Registered Engineer, a Registered Geologist and a member at large appointed by the Department.

The Advisory Committee shall be responsible for:

- A. Reviewing applications for certification; administering certification examinations;
- B. Reviewing and responding to complaints concerning poor quality work and unethical practices;
- C. Recommending disciplinary action;
- D. Recommending initial certification and recertification of individuals;
- E. Reviewing the content of educational programs and events and making recommendations regarding continuing education credits,
- F. Performing other activities as would be appropriate to the operation and maintenance of the Soil Classifiers certification program.