



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

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On-Site Wastewater Inspections during the COVID-19 Outbreak

The purpose of this communication is to explain how the Rice County Environmental Health Division will respond to inspections for septic system installation and soil verification requests during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Rice County Environmental Services is committed to the health, safety and welfare of the public, contractors and our workforce. We are committed to providing the community with the services they need during this difficult time.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Rice County has implemented employee education and practices aimed at reducing the spread of infectious disease, such as hand hygiene, hand washing and sanitizing, covering the nose and mouth with tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing, social distancing, staying home when sick, and reducing public accessibility to County building facilities. County employees will be observing these measures, and we ask that our partners in the construction industry, business owners and homeowners also commit to the recommended measures for limiting transmission of the virus.

Environmental Health staff are providing inspection services for septic system installations and soil verifications at sites that provide a safe environment. Please call (507) 332-6113 or email rcplanningzoning@co.rice.mn.us to schedule an inspection at least 24 hours in advance.

We will ask that the following protocol be adhered to:

- Only one person from the installation crew be in proximity of the system when staff arrive. This person cannot be sick or showing symptoms of a cold or the flu.
- For soil verifications: Soil boring profile can be removed from auger and placed on the grass or a tarp for viewing and if a soil pit please excavate an accessible ramp for staff to safely access and exit.
- Social distance of at least six feet be provided throughout the work site, including at the point of inspection. We will forego signatures on forms for the time being, only noting that the licensed person was present and certified the construction and components of the system.
- When an inspection/soil verification is requested, staff will ask the person requesting the inspection whether jobsite safety practices will be in place before County Staff arrives onsite.

In order to minimize opportunities for spread of infectious disease during the COVID-19 outbreak by limiting social contact, inspectors are authorized to be situationally flexible, limiting inspections to only those absolutely necessary and, when possible and practical, using photos, video, and other methods to observe and document that work is compliant with code requirements.

Rice County is committed above all, to the health and safety of the community. The COVID-19 outbreak presents challenges to all of us as we work to build a safe community. Working together, we can keep construction projects moving forward while doing our best to reduce risks of the spread of the disease.