

Policy

Septic Tanks and Drainfields in Shoreline

CP2019-03

Effective
10/15/2019

Last Revised
10/15/2019

Review Frequency
Every 3 years

Policy Contact
Dave Risvold
Sean Gaffney



Dennis Hanberg
Director

Review Requirements for Normal Maintenance and Repair Projects of Septic Tanks and Drainfields within Shoreline Jurisdiction.

Purpose

To clarify the PCC Title 18S review requirements for sewage disposal systems in shoreline jurisdiction.

Discussion

- PCC 18S.40.100 C9 states: “Septic tanks and drainfields for new sewage disposal systems shall be located outside of shoreline setbacks and buffer”. Installation of a new septic tank or drainfield in a setback or buffer requires a shoreline variance.
- PCC 18S.60.020 C(2) allows for: “Normal Maintenance and Repair” of existing structures or developments through the Exemption to a Substantial Development Permit process. PCC 18C.60.020 C(2) further explains that: “replacement of a structure or development may be authorized as repair where such replacement is the common method of repair for the type of structure or development, and the replacement structure or development is comparable to the original structure or development including, but not limited to its size, shape, configuration, location and external experience, and the replacement does not cause substantial adverse effects to shoreline resources or environment” (emphasis added).
- The “normal repair” of a failed septic drainfield often comes in the form of a new drainfield located in a different location than the original drainfield. This leads to uncertainty as to whether a variance is needed for the “new” feature.

Conclusion

Installation of a tank or septic drainfield within a setback or buffer, for purposes of correcting a failed system, may be allowed without a shoreline variance, but subject to the Exemption to a Substantial Development review process upon satisfying the following criteria:

1. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department has determined that an immediate public health hazard is posed by the failure and that there is no suitable location for the replacement tanks and drainfield outside of the shoreline setback or buffer.
2. In the event removal of trees or native understory vegetation result from the replacement, replanting may be required to ensure no net loss of shoreline function.

Policy Repair Projects in Shoreline Jurisdiction

CP2019-02

Sunset

This policy will remain in effect until the effective date of an updated Shoreline Master Program (SMP) for Pierce County.

Revision History

Revision #	Date	Description of Change(s)	Requested By
0	10/15/2019	Initial Publication	Dave Risvold