

## Wastewater Branch: Kauai

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CONTACT: Lori Vetter phone: 241-3328 OR [lori.vetter@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:lori.vetter@doh.hawaii.gov)

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

#### 1. When am I required to upgrade my cesspool?

All cesspools in the state will be required to be upgraded by 2050

Upgrades from cesspool are required by DOH under the following circumstances:

- a. Your cesspool has been pumped more than twice or has spilled more than once in 12 months.
- b. You are applying for a building modification for adding an enclosed area such as a bedroom or an ADU.
- c. You are changing the use of your property: example: from residential to commercial
- d. You are applying for a building modification (example: adding carport, lanai, bathroom) and your cesspool discharges into the groundwater

Please call/email DOH with the TMK for a more definite answer on your specific property. Do NOT call/email without it. This is a very busy office and incomplete requests will be ignored. An address can be used if TMK is not known. Advice is based on YOUR description of your project.

All advice is non-binding as the building permitting process is when the decision is made at DOH whether an upgrade is required. (Laws change frequently and owners add/change the scope of the described work)

#### 2. How to I find out if my building permit has been approved by Dept. of Health?

You can view it online at Kauai County's click2gov

<https://egov.kauai.gov/Click2GovBP>

Go to plan tracking status after putting in your permit number:

If you see CMP without an applicant line under it, it's approved

If you see ZZ-Applicant Health: it means you have been sent a letter by Dept. of Health and you need to address what it specified. You can also view DOH comments by clicking on DEPT. OF Health-State

You can also call DOH at 241-3321 with your permit number and/or TMK and we can assist you.

**3. How do I apply to install a septic system?**

You need to hire a professional civil engineer to design plans for you. He/she will meet with you and will do a percolation test at your property to determine your soil type and permeability. He/she will need a plot plan and your proposed floor plans. A \$100 review fee to State of Hawaii is due when your engineer submits the plans to DOH. Please email DOH for a list of engineers.

**4. How often should I pump my septic tank?**

DOH recommends every 3-5 years. More often if the home has many occupants or is a rental. DOH requires that you inspect your tank annually. Please keep good records as you will be asked for them if you come in for permitting. All septic tanks require pumping eventually. Solids leaving the tank will ruin your system and cost big \$\$ to repair.

**5. How do I know when to pump my cesspool?**

When it is full. Many never need pumping but if the water level is within the top 2' of the cover, it needs to be pumped. Slow draining water in your tubs, sinks, and toilets are an indicator of a full cesspool. Foul odors near the cesspool are an indicator of a full cesspool. Standing water anywhere near the cesspool when it's been dry is an indicator of a full cesspool. Leaving your cesspool constantly full will undermine the soil under the concrete cover and cause it to cave in.

**6. How do I know where my cesspool or septic system is located?**

Fill out a Request for Public Record form and email it to DOH. (You can scan it or take a picture of it) You can find the form on our website. See directions below.

You will be sent a copy of your 'cesspool card' or your septic as-built drawing. Many are scanned in and can be emailed to you directly. If DOH has no records, you'll have to hire a plumber to find it.

**7. Why is my septic system not approved for use by Dept. of Health but I received a CO (certificate of occupancy) from the County of Kauai?**

DOH is a state agency and the septic system permitting is a separate process from the County of Kauai building inspection process. Your septic engineer must do a final inspection of your septic system prior to backfilling it and submit the required paperwork to DOH. As the property owner and the person hiring the engineer, this is YOUR responsibility.

**8. Why is there no record of my cesspool at DOH?**

Property owners were required to call DOH for an inspection upon completion of the cesspool. Many did not do so.

**9. I am selling my house. Do I need to upgrade my cesspool?** No, not at this time.

**10. I have two homes on one cesspool. Do I need to upgrade my cesspool?**

Yes. The EPA banned this practice in 2005. Your cesspool would be considered a large capacity cesspool by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and was required to be upgraded in 2005. There was no 'grandfathering' of the cesspool. The EPA is a federal agency and have their own enforcement. It is not administered by DOH.

**11. Are there any tax credits or grant money for homeowners to upgrade from cesspool?**

There is a grant program under Cesspool Compliance Pilot Grant Program available on March 15, 2023. For more info and how to apply, please visit our website at

<https://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/>

**12. What laws govern Wastewater Branch?**

Hawaii Administrative Rules, Title 11 Chapter 62 (see our website to read it online)

**13. Where is your office located?**

Dept. of Health  
3040 Umi Street  
Lihue, HI 96766

Environmental Health is upstairs!! We have an elevator if you need it.

**14. How can I find out more about septic systems and how to inspect my system?**

You can watch a great video on how septic systems work. There is one on YouTube under Septics 101 and Septics 201 shows you how to inspect it.

**15. How can read more about Dept. of Health's rules on wastewater?**

Please see our website at

<https://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/>