

Expired Septic Permits and Expired Plan Check Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to staff for dealing with expired septic permits and expired septic plan checks.

GENERAL

It is the intent of this policy to provide guidelines for the consistent application of septic permit and plan check expiration and issuance of a new permit for any work not completed and inspected prior to expiration.

There have been many cases where record searches have revealed expired permits without any evidence of inspections having been made. In some of these cases, work may have been performed by the applicant without proper inspection procedures or final sign off. In other cases, the applicant may have abandoned the project and not completed any of the work authorized. In the event that work has been completed and not inspected, there are concerns that the work was not completed in compliance with code requirements. It is necessary, therefore, to determine the status of expired permits and the inspection records.

AUTHORITY

Sonoma County Code, Chapter 7, Section 7-5
Sonoma County Code, Chapter 24-31.5
California Plumbing Code, Section 103.1

PROCEDURE

I. Expired Plan Checks

If no permit is issued, or a plan check is not approved within one year following the date of first response to the application, the application shall expire by limitation, and all except one set of plans and supporting documentation will be returned to the applicant. If the original plans are resubmitted within 180 days following such expiration, the plan review fee shall be 25% of that otherwise required. No application shall be renewed in this fashion more than once. In order to resubmit a new application, the applicant shall resubmit plans and pay a new plan check review fee.

Well & Septic clerical support staff will send a “plan check due to expire” letter to the owner and applicant, 30 - 45 days prior to the permit expiration date. After the plan check expires, a “plan check has expired” letter will be sent to the owner and applicant. The two letters can be generated by going into the SEP, in the document screen, and selecting the appropriate

letter to print. If there is no response to the letters within 45 days of the mailing of “plan check has expired” letter, all except one set of the plans and supporting documentation will be mailed to the owner. The plans shall be stamped “Plan Check Expired.”

II. Expired Septic Permits

When a septic permit expires, a new septic permit application is required.

When an applicant applies for a septic permit, the permit history is reviewed by staff. If there are expired or inert permits listed on the permit history, it is necessary to determine: (1) if these permits apply to the septic system for which a permit is currently being requested; (2) what work was completed and inspected before the permits expired; and (3) if the project was abandoned. If the expired or inert permit(s) (hereafter “expired permits”) applies to the septic system for which a permit is currently being requested and it is determined that work was performed and inspected by the county but not finalized, the applicant will need to apply for a permit for the work that was not completed and/or inspected under the expired permit(s).

If the applicant or the county has copies of approved septic plans and inspection records for the expired permit(s), proceed to section 4, below.

If the applicant or the county has a copy of the permit application or expired permit or any other record but does not have a copy of the approved plans, a field inspection record, or any other approved inspection records for the expired permit(s), it will be necessary to determine the specifications of the system and construction methods used to install the system. The purpose of the search is to determine if there are any inspection records for the expired permit(s). The search may be conducted by the Well & Septic staff by searching the file room and/or the tub file. If it can not be determined that an inspection has been made or there are no approved plans on record, then a report from a qualified individual (findings) is required. Systems specifications and approved construction must be certified by a qualified individual with a wet stamp. (Will require exposure of the system, pre-perc, length of lines, IAMPO certified tank, etc.)

The following procedures shall apply:

1. If the expired permit(s) applies to the septic system for which a permit is currently being requested, but records are unclear as to whether or not any work (construction) was completed, the applicant will be asked to establish what construction, if any, was completed under the expired permit. If no construction was completed under the expired permit, a letter informing the Department that no construction was completed and requesting that the permit be cancelled shall be submitted by the property owner. The letter will be placed in the records and the permit status changed to “cancelled.” The applicant may then proceed with the permit currently being requested.

2. If the expired permit(s) does not apply to the septic system for which a permit is currently being requested, the applicant should be informed that the unrelated expired permit should be completed. A notation shall be entered into Permits Plus stating that the applicant was informed. The applicant may then proceed with the permit currently being requested.
3. If records for the expired permit(s) are located and it is determined that they apply to the septic system for which a permit is currently being requested, the records shall be copied so that they can be attached to the new permit. Applicable records include the septic permit application, copies of inspection notices indicating approved inspections, floor plans and any other documents that will verify the amount of work completed and inspected. The applicant will then be directed to the Well & Septic staff.
4. Well & Septic staff will review the inspection records to determine what work was completed and inspected before the permit expired, if there have been any code changes since the date of expiration, and if all applicable stamps on previously approved plans are still valid. The applicant will be required to provide a copy of those approved plans. If there have been no code changes since the date of expiration and all applicable stamps have not expired, the Well & Septic staff will re-stamp the file and job copy plans as approved. The applicant will then be referred to a Permit Technician who will calculate the permit fees based upon the amount of work completed and inspected as determined by the Well & Septic staff. (See section 7, below).
5. If there have been no code changes since the date of expiration, and the consultant's stamp/signature on the previously approved plans has expired, then the applicant shall obtain a new "wet stamp" before the Well & Septic staff can re-stamp the plans. If the project is at "final inspection," and there is no code change, then as an alternative, a letter from the consultant of record indicating that the project plan set is unchanged from his/her original approval would be acceptable. The letter shall bear his/her "wet stamp." If the engineer of record is no longer available, then the applicant will have to hire another to take responsibility as consultant of record and "wet stamp."
6. In addition to determining the last approved inspection, Well & Septic staff will also determine if a new plan check is required. A new plan check will only be required if there has been a code change since the date of expiration or if the applicant cannot supply a previously approved set of plans. If a new plan check is required, a recheck/reinspect fee shall be assessed.
7. The percentages listed below will be used to calculate permit fees which are based upon the amount of work completed and inspected as determined by the Well & Septic staff.

Work Completed and Approved	Percentage of Permit Fees for Work to be Completed	
	Standard System	Non-Standard System
No work completed	80%	50%
Septic tank	75%	40%
Septic tank, sump & control panel	65%	35%
Disposal field installation	40%	20%
Squirt test	30%	15%
Construction final/Engineer final letter	20%	10%

8. The description for the new permit on the permit application and in Permits Plus shall reference the expired permit number, a description of the septic system and include the percentage of permit fees. The following is an example: TO COMPLETE WORK STARTED UNDER EXPIRED PERMIT SEP00-1234 FOR MOUND SYSTEM (40%).
9. For expired permits that require a new plan check, all required approvals shall be obtained before the new permit is issued. If a new plan check for the expired permit is not required, then the applicant will not be required to obtain approvals previously issued.
10. When a septic permit is issued in connection with a code violation, Code Enforcement staff may require that the work be completed in less than three years. In these circumstances, a septic permit will be “expired” in Permits Plus even though the expired date is less than three years from the date of permit issuance. Customers with these expired permits shall be referred to Code Enforcement staff who will determine if the permit(s) can be “extended” up to the three year limitation.
11. When the new permit is initialized, the expired permit will be checked for the following and the appropriate action taken:
 - a) **Locks, Holds, Notices, Comments** - The Permit Technician will bring them forward onto the new permit as applicable. If necessary, the applicant will be referred to the appropriate staff for resolution of any issues related to the expired permit.
 - b) **Complete permit history on all previously known parcel numbers (inactive parcels)** - The Permit Technician will verify whether or not a violation exists on the property. If a violation exists, the applicant will be referred to the Code Enforcement Cubicle.

- c) **Unpaid fees** - Any unpaid fees, such as reinspection fees, shall be carried forward to the new permit for payment.

Approved by:

/s/ Pete Parkinson

Pete Parkinson, Director

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