



Building sewers connected to septic systems

What septic professionals need to know

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) created an interagency workgroup (IAWG) to recommend statutory and administrative rule changes to simplify the regulation and administration of work on building sewers connected to septic systems. Language from the 2015 Legislative Session codifies changes that were recommended by the IAWG with input from affected stakeholders in the septic system, utility contracting, and plumbing trades. The Legislature directed MPCA to update its rules to implement the changes.

The proposed solution allows septic system professionals to work with only one agency for their licensing needs, and permits them to work on building sewers with respect to the plumbing code. Details of the proposed solution are outlined below.

Co-definition of the building sewer connected to septic systems

A “building sewer connected to a septic system” is the pipe that connects the end of a structure’s building drain to a septic system. Building sewers connected to septic systems are now co-defined as a component of both the plumbing system and the septic system.

All building sewers will continue to be defined as plumbing. The Minnesota Plumbing Code will still define building sewer specifications and work on building sewers will continue to be subject to the requirements of the plumbing program.

Building sewers connected to septic systems are now also defined as components of septic systems. This creates some flexibility about who can conduct this work:

- a. Properly bonded septic system design contractors may now design building sewers connected to septic systems. As always, the design must comply with the Minnesota Plumbing Code. Designers **must submit and obtain DLI approval** for building sewer design plans and specifications for ‘other establishments’ (public, commercial, and industrial buildings) and residential buildings with five or more units as required by [Minn. R. pt. 1300.0215, subp. 6](#). The following application contains submittal instructions: http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/PDF/pe_plumbplanrevapp.pdf. In areas that have adopted the state building code, building sewer designs for one and two family dwellings and residential buildings with less than five units may be subject to the requirements of the local plumbing program administrative authority. Contact your local plumbing program for local requirements: <http://workplace.doli.state.mn.us/jurisdiction/>.
- b. Properly bonded septic system inspection contractors or local government qualified employees **may permit and/or inspect** building sewers connected to septic systems for compliance with the Minnesota Plumbing Code when the installation is not subject to the requirements of [Minn. R. pt. 1300.0215, subp. 6](#) and no other approval is required by the plumbing program administrative authority, or if the inspector has permission from the plumbing program administrative authority to do so. Identify the appropriate plumbing program administrative authority here: <http://workplace.doli.state.mn.us/jurisdiction/>.

- c. Septic system installers may install building sewers if they hold a plumbing license or a pipe laying certificate. Prior to installation, septic systems installers must ensure plans and specifications for building sewers are approved by the plumbing program administrative authority when the installation is subject to the requirements of [Minn. R. pt. 1300.0215, subp. 6](#) or other approval is required by a jurisdiction with code enforcement responsibilities. Installers must provide adequate notice to the local septic system program and appropriate plumbing program representative when work requires inspection.

Surety bonding and license application/renewal changes

The authorizations above depend on proper education on the pertinent aspects of the plumbing code and appropriate surety bond coverage. For that reason, the subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS) bond is changing to mirror the requirements of the plumbing program: \$25,000 of liability that accumulates every two years. This updated bond, now maintained by the MPCA (not DLI), allows septic system license holders to manage their licensure through one agency. All SSTS business licensees will have to update their bond to the new, simplified form in two stages:

- a. Installation licenses must update this form and submit it to the MPCA prior to December 31, 2015, the date that most bonds currently registered with DLI are set to expire.
- b. All non-installation licenses must update this simplified form as a condition of the 2016 business license renewal.

All designated certified individuals for each installation business must either have an individual plumbing license or submit evidence of pipe laying training to the MPCA by providing a copy of their pipe layer card with their bond form submission. The DLI will use this information to notify businesses of their authorization as certified pipe layers.

Subsurface sewage treatment systems licensees who also hold a plumbing contractor license issued by DLI must continue to work with both agencies. The \$25,000 Plumbing Contractor Surety Bond filed with DLI will cover both licenses, but plumbing licensees must also submit a duplicate original bond with the MPCA.

Frequently-asked-questions about building sewer regulations for local SSTS inspectors

Is there a separate certification for SSTS professionals that work on building sewers?

Installers will continue the need to demonstrate their pipe layer training credentials and hold pipe layer cards, but to the MPCA instead of DLI. There is no separate certification requirement that must be held by SSTS inspectors or designers.

What kind of training is required to work on building sewers?

The pipe layer certification training was integrated into the SSTS curriculum when the plumbing code was implemented statewide in 2007. Minn. § 326B.46, subd. 1 requires this training for individuals that install building sewers. All SSTS designers and inspectors that have become certified since 2008 have also completed this training.

I became certified before 2008. Do I need to take a class to design or inspect building sewers?

No – only SSTS installers must hold pipe layer cards. While designers and inspectors are not required to provide evidence of specific training, it is expected they be knowledgeable of the requirements of the Minnesota Plumbing Code relating to building sewer specifications, installation practices, and testing protocols. Future SSTS continuing education, fact sheets, and newsletter style correspondence will include this information between 2015 and 2019.

How does the Minnesota plumbing program affect plan review and inspection requirements for building sewers connected to SSTS?

Minnesota Plumbing Code is administered and enforced statewide by the DLI. Its code administration depends on two things, 1) municipal agreements, and 2) type of building. All building sewers connected to SSTS that serve public, commercial, industrial, or five or more unit residential buildings are administered through DLI's Plumbing Program, unless a formal plumbing plan review agreement exists with the municipality. For more information on plumbing plan review agreements and exceptions, see: http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/PDF/pe_planrevagree.pdf. Local units of government with a plan review agreement with the DLI plumbing program do their own plumbing review for compliance with the Minnesota Plumbing Code within their jurisdiction. State or local plumbing program administrative authorities are responsible for ensuring acceptable testing methods are used during building sewer inspections. Identify the plumbing program administrative authority in your jurisdiction here: <http://workplace.doli.state.mn.us/jurisdiction/>.

What does the Minnesota Plumbing Code say about building sewers?

The Minnesota Plumbing Code is the basis of building sewer specifications that must be met whenever a building sewer is designed or installed. The Minnesota Plumbing Code defines the pipe's size, slope, materials, methods, cleanouts, testing, and setback requirements. The septic professional training program has taught these principles since the training program began. These specifications have not changed as a result of this effort.

How do these changes affect local SSTS programs?

The interagency work group worked very carefully to not introduce any new requirements for local programs as a result of this effort. It is exclusively intended to make the lives of SSTS professionals easier while increasing the likelihood of plumbing code compliance verification. Local SSTS programs **are not required** to inspect the building sewer connected to a septic system as a result of the proposed legislation. The rules will **allow them to conduct** permitting and/or inspections of building sewers when there is no plumbing program requirement for an inspection to take place, or if they have permission from the local or state plumbing program authority. The second scenario is meant to help prevent a separate plumbing inspector from having to visit a site to conduct a very brief inspection, and will facilitate cooperation between plumbing and SSTS inspectors, allowing the most appropriate personnel to conduct the required inspection activities. The details of what constitutes a building sewer inspection and administrative practices to ensure compliance with the plumbing code and program will be included in SSTS continuing education and printed in fact sheet and newsletter style correspondence.

We have not adopted the state building code in our county, so we don't do building inspections. We only issue zoning permits and require that they hire their own electrical inspector. What do we need to do to comply with the changes to building sewer regulations?

In the case of your county, the SSTS program may permit the installation and/or inspect building sewers connected to SSTS that are not connected to public, commercial, industrial, or five unit or more residential buildings. When a building sewer serves these structures, DLI's plumbing program will review the design and inspect the building sewer component of the system. This means that SSTS designers in your county will need to submit their building sewer designs to DLI for review, prior to installation, and installers must contact DLI for final inspection for public, commercial, industrial, or five or more unit residential buildings that are connected to a septic system.

Additional resources

Plumbing Program Plan Review Unit

<http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/PlanPlumbing.asp>

Plumbing Plan Review Application

http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/PDF/pe_plumbplanrevapp.pdf

Plumbing Inspection Information and Permit

http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/PDF/pe_inspection_fee_submittal.pdf

Plumbing Program Plan Review FAQ

<http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/PlanPlumbingFAQ.asp>

Minnesota State Building Code Jurisdiction Directory

<http://workplace.doli.state.mn.us/jurisdiction/>