

455B.172 Jurisdiction of department and local boards.

1. The department is the agency of the state to prevent, abate, or control water pollution and to conduct the public water supply program.

2. The department shall carry out the responsibilities of the state related to private water supplies and private sewage disposal systems for the protection of the environment and the public health and safety of the citizens of the state.

3. Each county board of health shall adopt standards for private water supplies and private sewage disposal facilities. These standards shall be at least as stringent but consistent with the standards adopted by the commission. If a county board of health has not adopted standards for private water supplies and private sewage disposal facilities, the standards adopted by the commission shall be applied and enforced within the county by the county board of health.

4. Each county board of health shall regulate the private water supply and private sewage disposal facilities located within the county board's jurisdiction, including the enforcement of standards adopted pursuant to [this section](#).

5. a. The department shall maintain jurisdiction over and regulate the direct discharge to a water of the state. The department shall retain concurrent authority to enforce state standards for private water supply and private sewage disposal facilities within a county, and exercise departmental authority if the county board of health fails to fulfill board responsibilities pursuant to [this section](#).

b. The department shall by rule adopt standards for the commercial cleaning of private sewage disposal facilities, including but not limited to septic tanks, and for the disposal of waste from the facilities. The standards shall not be in conflict with the state building code adopted pursuant to [section 103A.7](#). A person shall not commercially clean such facilities or dispose of waste from such facilities unless the person has been issued a license by the department. The department shall be exclusively responsible for adopting the standards and issuing licenses. However, county boards of health shall enforce the standards and licensing requirements established by the department. The department may contract for the delegation of the authority for inspection of land application sites, record reviews, and equipment inspections to a county board of health. In the event of entering into such a contract, the department shall retain concurrent authority over such activities. Application for the license shall be made in the manner provided by the department. Licenses expire one year from the date of issue unless revoked and may be renewed in the manner provided by the department. A license application shall include registration applications for each vehicle used by the applicant for purposes of collecting septage from private sewage disposal facilities and each vehicle used by the applicant for purposes of applying septage to land. Septic disposal management plans shall be submitted to the department and approved annually as a condition of licensing and shall also be filed annually with the county board of health in the county where a proposed septage application site is located. The septic disposal management plan shall include, but not be limited to, the sites of septage application, the anticipated volume of septage applied to each site, the area of each septage application site, the type of application to be used at each site, the volume of septage expected to be collected from private sewage disposal facilities, and a list of registered vehicles collecting septage from private sewage disposal facilities and applying septage to land. The annual license or license renewal fee for a person commercially cleaning private sewage disposal facilities shall be established by the department based on the volume of septage that is applied to land. A septic management fund is created in the state treasury under the control of the department. Annual license and license renewal fees collected pursuant to [this section](#) shall be deposited in the septic management fund and are appropriated to the department for purposes of contracting with county boards of health to conduct land application site inspections, record reviews, and septic cleaning equipment inspections. A person violating [this section](#) or the rules adopted pursuant to [this section](#) as determined by the department is subject to a civil penalty of not more than two hundred fifty dollars. The department shall adopt rules related to, but not limited to, recordkeeping requirements, application procedures and limitations, contamination issues, loss of septage, failure to file a septic disposal management plan, application by vehicles that are not properly registered, wrongful

application, and violations of a septic disposal management plan. Each day that a violation continues constitutes a separate offense. The penalty shall be assessed for the duration of time commencing with the time the violation begins and ending with the time the violation is corrected. The septic disposal management plan may be examined to determine the duration of the violation. Moneys collected by the department from the imposition of civil penalties shall be deposited in the general fund of the state. Moneys collected by a county board of health from the imposition of civil penalties shall be deposited in the general fund of the county.

6. a. The department shall by rule adopt standards for the commercial cleaning of toilet units and for the disposal of waste from toilet units. Waste from toilet units shall be disposed of at a wastewater treatment facility and shall not be applied to land. The department may contract for the delegation of the authority for inspection of record reviews and equipment inspections for such units to a county board of health. In the event of entering into such a contract, the department shall retain concurrent authority over such activities.

b. A person shall not commercially clean toilet units or dispose of waste from such units unless the person has been issued a license by the department. The department shall be exclusively responsible for adopting the standards and issuing licenses. However, county boards of health shall enforce the standards and licensing requirements established by the department. Application for the license shall be made in the manner provided by the department. Licenses expire one year from the date of issue unless revoked and may be renewed in the manner provided by the department. A license application shall include registration applications for each vehicle used by the applicant for purposes of collecting waste from toilet units and each vehicle used by the applicant for purposes of transporting waste from toilet units to a wastewater treatment facility. The annual license or license renewal fee for a person commercially cleaning toilet units shall be established by the department based on the number of trucks or vehicles used by the licensee for purposes of commercial cleaning of toilet units and for the disposal of waste from the toilet units. For purposes of [this subsection](#), “vehicle” includes a trailer.

c. A toilet unit fund is created in the state treasury under the control of the department. Annual license and license renewal fees collected pursuant to [this subsection](#) shall be deposited in the toilet unit fund and are appropriated to the department for purposes of contracting with county boards of health to conduct record reviews and toilet unit cleaning equipment inspections.

d. A person violating [this section](#) or the rules adopted pursuant to [this section](#) as determined by the department is subject to a civil penalty of not more than five hundred dollars. Each day that a violation continues constitutes a separate offense. The penalty shall be assessed for the duration of time commencing with the time the violation begins and ending with the time the violation is corrected. Moneys collected by the department from the imposition of civil penalties shall be deposited in the general fund of the state. Moneys collected by a county board of health from the imposition of civil penalties shall be deposited in the general fund of the county.

7. a. The department is the state agency to regulate the construction, reconstruction and abandonment of all of the following water wells:

(1) Those used as part of a public water supply system as defined in [section 455B.171](#).

(2) Those used for the withdrawal of water for which a permit is required pursuant to [section 455B.268, subsection 1](#).

(3) Those used for the purpose of monitoring groundwater quantity and quality required or installed pursuant to directions or regulations of the department.

b. A local board of health is the agency to regulate the construction, reconstruction and abandonment of water wells not otherwise regulated by the department. The local board of health shall not adopt standards relative to the construction, reconstruction and abandonment of wells less stringent than those adopted by the department.

8. The department is the state agency to regulate the registration or certification of water well contractors pursuant to [section 455B.187](#) or [section 455B.190A](#).

9. Pursuant to [chapter 28E](#), the department may delegate its authority for regulation of the construction, reconstruction and abandonment of water wells specified in [subsection 7](#)

or the registration of water well contractors specified in [subsection 8](#) to boards of health or other agencies which have adequate authority and ability to administer and enforce the requirements established by law or rule.

10. Any county ordinance related to sewage sludge which is in effect on March 1, 1997, shall not be preempted by any provision of [section 455B.171](#), [455B.174](#), [455B.183](#), or [455B.304](#).

11. a. If a building where a person resides, congregates, or is employed is served by a private sewage disposal system, the sewage disposal system serving the building shall be inspected prior to any transfer of ownership of the building. The requirements of [this subsection](#) shall be applied to all types of ownership transfer including at the time a seller-financed real estate contract is signed. The county recorder shall not record a deed or any other property transfer or conveyance document until either a certified inspector's report is provided which documents the condition of the private sewage disposal system and whether any modifications are required to conform to standards adopted by the department or, in the event that weather or other temporary physical conditions prevent the certified inspection from being conducted, the buyer has executed and submitted a binding acknowledgment with the county board of health to conduct a certified inspection of the private sewage disposal system at the earliest practicable time and to be responsible for any required modifications to the private sewage disposal system as identified by the certified inspection. Any type of on-site treatment unit or private sewage disposal system must be inspected according to rules developed by the department. For the purposes of [this subsection](#), "transfer" means the transfer or conveyance by sale, exchange, real estate contract, or any other method by which real estate and improvements are purchased, if the property includes at least one but not more than four dwelling units. However, "transfer" does not include any of the following:

(1) A transfer made pursuant to a court order, including but not limited to a transfer under [chapter 633](#) or [633A](#), the execution of a judgment, the foreclosure of a real estate mortgage pursuant to [chapter 654](#), the forfeiture of a real estate contract under [chapter 656](#), a transfer by a trustee in bankruptcy, a transfer by eminent domain, or a transfer resulting from a decree for specific performance.

(2) A transfer to a mortgagee by a mortgagor or successor in interest who is in default, a transfer by a mortgagee who has acquired real property as a result of a deed in lieu of foreclosure or has acquired real property under [chapter 654](#) or [655A](#), or a transfer back to a mortgagor exercising a right of first refusal pursuant to [section 654.16A](#).

(3) A transfer by a fiduciary in the course of the administration of a decedent's estate, guardianship, conservatorship, or trust.

(4) A transfer between joint tenants or tenants in common.

(5) A transfer made to a spouse, or to a person in the lineal line of consanguinity of a person making the transfer.

(6) A transfer between spouses resulting from a decree of dissolution of marriage, a decree of legal separation, or a property settlement agreement which is incidental to the decree, including a decree ordered pursuant to [chapter 598](#).

(7) A transfer in which the transferee intends to demolish or raze the building. The department shall adopt rules pertaining to such transfers.

(8) A transfer of property with a system that was installed not more than two years prior to the date of the transfer.

(9) A deed arising from a partition proceeding.

(10) A tax sale deed issued by the county treasurer.

(11) A transfer for which consideration is five hundred dollars or less.

(12) A deed between a family corporation, partnership, limited partnership, limited liability partnership, or limited liability company as defined in [section 428A.2](#), [subsection 15](#), and its stockholders, partners, or members for the purpose of transferring real property in an incorporation or corporate dissolution or in the organization or dissolution of a partnership, limited partnership, limited liability partnership, or limited liability company under the laws of this state, where the deed is given for no actual consideration other than for shares or for

debt securities of the family corporation, partnership, limited partnership, limited liability partnership, or limited liability company.

b. At the time of inspection, any septic tank existing as part of the sewage disposal system shall be opened and have the contents pumped out and disposed of as provided for by rule. In the alternative, the owner may provide evidence of the septic tank being properly pumped out within three years prior to the inspection by a commercial septic tank cleaner licensed by the department which shall include documentation of the size and condition of the tank and its components at the time of such occurrence.

c. If a private sewage disposal system is failing to ensure effective wastewater treatment or is otherwise improperly functioning, the private sewage disposal system shall be renovated to meet current construction standards, as adopted by the department, either by the seller or, by agreement, and within a reasonable time period as determined by the county board of health or the department, by the buyer. If the private sewage disposal system is properly treating the wastewater and not creating an unsanitary condition in the environment at the time of inspection, the system is not required to meet current construction standards.

d. Inspections shall be conducted by an inspector certified by the department.

e. (1) Pursuant to [chapter 17A](#), the department shall adopt certification requirements for inspectors, including training, testing, and fees, and shall establish uniform statewide inspection criteria and an inspection form. The inspector certification training shall include use of the criteria and form. Only a certified inspector may conduct a time-of-transfer inspection.

(2) An inspector's certification shall be considered current if the inspector has paid initial and renewal fees required to maintain certification, is up-to-date on continuing education units, is in good standing with the department, and has not otherwise been decertified.

(3) The department shall maintain a publicly available list of currently certified inspectors on the department's internet site. The department shall maintain the list such that an inspector's name is displayed next to the date that the inspector's certification first became valid and the date that the inspector's certification is set to expire.

(4) A certified inspector who fraudulently files a time-of-transfer report is subject to a civil penalty of five thousand dollars and the inspector's certification shall be suspended for one year.

f. County personnel are eligible to become certified inspectors. A county may set an inspection fee for inspections conducted by certified county personnel. A county shall allow any department certified inspector to provide inspection services under [this subsection](#) within the county's jurisdiction.

g. Following an inspection, the inspection form and any attachments shall be provided to the county board of health and the department for enforcement of any follow-up mandatory system improvement and to the department for record.

h. An inspection is valid for a period of two years for any ownership transfers during that period.

i. [This subsection](#) preempts any city or county ordinance related to the inspection of private sewage disposal systems in association with the transfer of ownership of a building.

[C66, 71, §455B.3; C73, §455B.31; C75, 77, 79, 81, §135.20, 455B.31; [82 Acts, ch 1199, §9](#)]
C83, §455B.172

[83 Acts, ch 137, §3](#); [84 Acts, ch 1121, §3](#); [85 Acts, ch 176, §2](#); [87 Acts, ch 225, §112, 113](#); [90 Acts, ch 1243, §1](#); [91 Acts, ch 224, §4](#); [97 Acts, ch 137, §3](#); [2004 Acts, ch 1086, §74](#); [2004 Acts, ch 1167, §11](#); [2005 Acts, ch 153, §2, 3](#); [2006 Acts, ch 1010, §172, 177](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1033, §1, 2](#); [2009 Acts, ch 175, §22, 25](#); [2010 Acts, ch 1061, §85](#); [2010 Acts, ch 1120, §1 – 5](#); [2011 Acts, ch 25, §51](#); [2023 Acts, ch 150, §1](#)

Referred to in [§358.16](#), [358.22](#), [384.38](#), [455B.172A](#), [455B.188](#), [558.69](#)