



GRAHAM COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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DATE: January 03, 2017

TO: Prospective Homebuilders Served by Septic or Onsite Wastewater Systems

FROM: Graham County Health Department

RE: **Septic System Sizing and Reserve Area Requirements**

If it has been determined that you cannot connect to a sanitary sewer system as required by AAC R18-A309(5), this memo applies to how your septic system will be sized. The State of Arizona requires that septic system sizing be based on the larger of either bedroom count or plumbing fixture count. Plumbing fixture units and criteria for septic tank size and design flow are listed in tables in AAC R18-9-A314(4).

It is important to understand that bedroom count – for the purpose of septic design – is based on the State’s specific criteria for a room that qualifies as a bedroom rather than the builder’s intended or immediate purpose for the room (e.g. office, entertainment room, etc.). For the purpose of septic design, Arizona defines a bedroom as any room that has:

- A floor space of at least 70 square feet in area, excluding closets;
- A ceiling height of at least 7 feet;
- Electrical service and ventilation;
- A closet or an area where a closet could be constructed;
- At least one window capable of being opened and used for emergency egress; *and*
- A method of entry and exit to the room that allows the room to be considered distinct from other rooms in the dwelling and to afford a level of privacy customarily expected for such a room.

The other item that must be considered in the initial planning stages of the home is the septic system reserve area. Because it is expected that a septic system will eventually need to be replaced, a 100 percent reserve area needs to be maintained for this purpose, taking into account all current setbacks. No permanent structures may be built on the reserve area and landscaping is discouraged. The only exemption to this requirement is subdivision lots created prior to 1974; however, these systems must also eventually be replaced, and in some situations a conventional septic system is not possible due to the limited area.

The Graham County Health Department strongly recommends making septic considerations an early priority. By taking into account any site limitations (soil, drainage, setbacks, flood zones, etc.), the home builder can make any necessary accommodations early in the process to maximize home value and avoid the cost and inconvenience of last-minute changes. If you have any questions about the information in this memo, please contact the Graham County Health Department at 928-428-0110.