



University of Arizona Onsite Wastewater Education Program

HIGHLIGHTS

Determining the Qualifications of an Inspector for ADEQ's *Transfer of Ownership Inspection Program*

By

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As a real estate professional, you are often the first person a buyer or seller of real estate goes to for questions about a real estate transaction. If the property has a septic system, the system needs to be inspected by an eligible inspector within six months of the transfer. The Arizona Administrative Code (R18-9-A316) specifies the following qualifications:

1. Possesses working knowledge of the type of facility and the inspection process;
2. Holds a certificate of training from a course recognized by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) as sufficiently covering the information specified in R18-9-A316; and
3. Holds a license in one of the following categories:
 - a. An Arizona-registered engineer;
 - b. An Arizona-registered sanitarian;
 - c. An owner of a vehicle with a human excreta collection and transport license issued under 18 A.A.C. 13, Article 11 or an employee of the owner of the vehicle;
 - d. A contractor licensed by the Register of Contractors in one of the following categories:
 - i. Residential license B-4 or C-41;
 - ii. Commercial license A, A-12, or L-41; or
 - iii. Dual license KA or K-41;
 - iv. A wastewater treatment plant operator certified under 18 A.A. C. 5 Article 1; or
 - v. A person qualifying under another category designated by the Department.

As a real estate professional, how do you evaluate the inspector to determine if the person is qualified under these rules? The following information can be used to help you assess the qualifications of the inspector for a Transfer of Ownership Inspection.

Possesses a working knowledge of the type of facility and the inspection process:

This is the hardest category to assess. Inspectors are not supposed to inspect facilities (sewage treatment systems) that they are not familiar with. This qualification is particularly important for systems **other than** conventional septic systems (septic tank followed by a trench, bed, or chamber). These "other" systems are normally referred to as alternative systems. Asking the following questions may help you determine if the person has the requisite knowledge of a sewage treatment system other than a conventional septic system:

- Have you ever inspected this type of sewage treatment system? If yes, are you at liberty to tell me which ones?
- How many of these types of systems have you inspected?

- Where did you get your knowledge of these types of systems? There are manufacturers that do provide training for the installation and maintenance of their systems. There are classes offered through the University of Arizona that help inspectors better understand the theory and practice of various alternative systems or components of systems.

Holds a certificate of training from a course recognized by ADEQ:

Currently, the only entity recognized by ADEQ to train inspectors for the Transfer of Ownership Inspection program is the National Association of Wastewater Technicians (NAWT, www.nawt.org). On their website, they have a search function that allows you to search by state and/or name. It tells you when the inspector needs to recertify. NAWT trained inspectors need to obtain eight (8) hours of continuing education every two (2) years to remain in good standing and keep certified. Each person receives an individual number and must submit that information on the Inspection Report (https://static.azdeq.gov/forms/septic_system_insp.pdf).

Holds a license in one of the following categories:

This is also a somewhat difficult qualification to assess because there is no centrally located database that cross-links all the various categories with the person passing an approved course. However, in the Arizona Cooperative Extension publication, AZ1554, *What You Should Know When You're Having Your Septic System Inspected for the Transfer of Ownership Program*, we attempted to help you determine if an inspector has the requisite licensure.

1. To check the current registration status of an **Arizona-registered engineer**, go to the Arizona State Board of Technical Registration and choose "For Public" in the top navigation bar and select "Registered Professional Search" from the drop-down menu: <http://www.btr.state.az.us/> >> For Public >> Registered Professional Search.
2. To check the good standing of an **Arizona-registered sanitarian**, go to the Arizona Department of Health Services website, 1) choose "Topics" from the top navigation bar, 2) choose "Licenses and Certification" from the drop-down menu, 3) choose "Sanitarians' Council" from the list of alphabetical topics, 4) choose "List of Arizona Registered Sanitarians" from the home page and you will open a PDF with a list of the Arizona Registered Sanitarians (the list is updated every quarter): <https://www.azdhs.gov/> >> Topics >> Licenses and Certification >> Sanitarians' Council >> List of Arizona Registered Sanitarians.
3. To check for ADEQ-approved **septic haulers**, go to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality website 1) choose Programs from the top navigation bar, 2) choose Waste Programs from the drop-down menu, 3) choose Septage Haulers from the right navigation pane under "See More," and 4) choose "Licensed Septage Hauler List" from right navigation pane under e "See More" and you will open a PDF file with the list of licensed septage haulers: <http://www.azdeq.gov> >> Programs >> Waste Programs >> Septage Haulers >> Licensed Septage Hauler List.
4. To check the current registration status of **Arizona-registered contractor** with one or more of the following licenses (A, A-12, B-4, C-41, KA, K-41, and/or L-41), go to the Register of Contractor's website and choose the "Search Here" button under the words "Anyone can pretend to be a contractor. Check the license.": <https://roc.az.gov> >> Search Here.

5. To check the current certification of a **certified wastewater treatment operator**, go to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality's website and 1) choose "Records Center" from the top navigation bar, 2) choose "Search Databases Online" from the right navigation area under "Request|View Records," and then choose "Water and Wastewater Certified Operators" from the Water Quality section: <http://www.azdeq.gov/> >> Records Center >> Search Databases Online >> Water and Wastewater Certified Operators.

Remember that the Transfer of Ownership inspection is legally required for ALL real estate transactions where there is an onsite wastewater treatment facility on the property. The inspection cannot be waived for any reason.

Summary

All homes with an onsite wastewater treatment facility are required, by law, to have their septic system inspected prior to the sale of the property by an eligible inspector. The inspector will provide full disclosure on the physical and operational conditions of the onsite wastewater treatment facility at the time of the inspection. The inspection needs to be conducted by a qualified inspector. There are 3 qualifications that must be met by the inspector before he/she can conduct the inspection: have a working knowledge of the sewage treatment system, holds a certificate of training from a recognized course, and holds licensure in one of five categories. You can use the information in this article/paper to assist your client in selecting a qualified inspector.