



Whatcom County Health Department  
**Septic Tank Testing  
for Water-Tightness**

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Sewage tanks must be tested for water-tightness at the project site and witnessed by an individual, such as the project design engineer, designer or installer.

### **Vacuum Testing Steps**

- Seal the empty tank.
- Temporarily seal access openings, risers, and inlet and outlet pipes.
- Introduce negative pressure into the tank and apply a vacuum to 4" (100 mm) of mercury. The tank passes the water-tightness test when the 4" of negative pressure is held for a period of 5 minutes, with no measurable loss of pressure. If the vacuum drops before completion of the 5 minutes, it shall be brought back to 4" of mercury and held for another 5 minutes with no measurable loss of vacuum.

### **Hydrostatic Testing Steps**

- Seal the empty tank.
- Seal access openings, risers, and inlet and outlet pipes.
- Fill the empty tank with water to a point 2" above the point of riser connection, to the top of the tank. Let the tank stand for 1 hour. If there is a measurable drop in the water surface elevation, refill the tank and let the tank stand for 1 hour. The tank passes the water-tightness test once the water level is held for 1 hour without any measurable loss. Tanks may still be used if damp spots on the exterior concrete surface exist.

When leakage occurs and the tank can be repaired, the water-tightness test should be made on the tank after repairs have been completed. The test must be completed in accordance with either **Vacuum or Hydrostatic Testing Steps**.

### **Tank Certification and Submittal Requirements**

- Sewage tanks must be certified as being water-tight prior to Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) approving an On-Site Sewage (OSS) Application.
- A certification form must be completed by an individual, such as the project design engineer, designer, or installer and submitted to WCHD upon completion of water-tight test, assuring the tank met the water-tight testing requirements.

