



Buying a Home With a Septic System in Polk County

polktx.com/real-estate/rural/septic-systems/



GENERAL INFORMATION, NOT ADVICE

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What it is and why it matters when buying

Most rural homes in Polk County have an on-site sewage facility, usually called a septic system. It is either a conventional tank and drain field or an aerobic unit, which has a control panel, an air pump and sprinkler heads. The two run differently and come with different obligations.

Who holds the permit file depends on location. Outside city limits, it is the Polk County Permit Department. Within 2,000 feet of Lake Livingston, it is the Trinity River Authority. The file shows what was approved for the lot.

Aerobic systems carry an ongoing duty. The owner keeps a maintenance contract with a licensed provider, who visits and files reports with the permitting office. If a house has an aerobic unit and no current contract, raise it before closing.

What to check before you buy

- Ask for the permit file. The county has no online lookup. Call or email the Permit Department with the property address.
- Within 2,000 feet of Lake Livingston, ask the Trinity River Authority for the file instead. TRA's online portal can also search existing permits.
- Find out whether the system is conventional or aerobic.
- For an aerobic system, get the current maintenance contract and recent service reports. State rules call for a report at least every four months, or every six with electronic monitoring.
- Ask whether an Affidavit to the Public was filed for the system. Polk County and TRA both publish this form. Look for it in the deed records.
- Adding a bedroom, a second home or living quarters? Ask whether the current system is permitted for it. The county requires a separate septic permit for each additional home on a tract.

Questions to ask the seller or listing agent

- Is the system conventional or aerobic?
- When was it last pumped or serviced, and by whom?
- Is there a current maintenance contract? Can I see the recent reports?
- Was the system permitted, and do you have the permit or final approval?
- Have there been alarms, backups or repairs? When?
- Where are the tank, the drain field or the spray area?

Who handles it in Polk County

Polk County Permit Department

Septic (OSSF) permits, development permits, 911 addresses and floodplain questions outside city limits. For floodplain, ask for the Floodplain Administrator.

PHONE (936) 327-6820 ext. 1
EMAIL permits@co.polk.tx.us
ADDRESS 602 E. Church St., Suite 141,
Livingston, TX 77351
HOURS Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.
WEB polktx.gov (polktx.gov/325/Permits)

Source: Polk County Permits page

Trinity River Authority, Lake Livingston Project

Septic permits within 2,000 feet of Lake Livingston, and permits for piers, boathouses, bulkheads and dredging on the shoreline.

PHONE (936) 365-2292
ADDRESS 5170 S. FM 1988, Livingston, TX 77351
WEB trinityra.org (trinityra.org/lake_information/water_storage/lake_livingston/index.php)

Source: Polk County FAQ (2,000-foot rule); TRA Lake Livingston and permit pages

Look it up yourself

Official sources only.

TCEQ septic information for homeowners (tceq.texas.gov/permitting/ossf/ossfhomeowners.html)
State rules, maintenance basics and how to find the permitting authority.

TCEQ septic maintenance rules (tceq.texas.gov/permitting/ossf/ossfmaintenance.html)
What an aerobic maintenance contract must cover and how often reports are due.

TRA online permits and licenses (trinityra.org/lake_information/water_storage/lake_livingston/online_permits_and_licenses.php)
Search existing TRA permits and see the map of TRA's septic areas.

Polk County Permits page (polktx.gov/325/Permits)
Development, septic and 911 permits, fees and the floodplain contact.

How to find a licensed professional

PolkTX does not recommend or list contractors. To check that someone holds a current Texas license, use the state's own search:

TCEQ occupational license search (www2.tceq.texas.gov/lic_dpa/index.cfm?fuseaction=licall.searchgp)

Septic (OSSF) installers, site evaluators and maintenance providers. Choose "On Site Sewage Facility Licensing," then the license type.

TREC license holder search (trec.texas.gov/license-search)

Home inspectors. Search under Inspectors.

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Sources for this page:

- Polk County Permit Department (Polk County Permits page) (polktx.gov/325/Permits)
- Trinity River Authority, Lake Livingston Project (Polk County FAQ (2,000-foot rule); TRA Lake Livingston and permit pages) (trinityra.org/lake_information/water_storage/lake_livingston/index.php)
- TCEQ septic information for homeowners (tceq.texas.gov/permitting/ossf/ossfhomeowners.html)
- TCEQ septic maintenance rules (tceq.texas.gov/permitting/ossf/ossfmaintenance.html)
- TRA online permits and licenses (trinityra.org/lake_information/water_storage/lake_livingston/online_permits_and_licenses.php)
- TCEQ occupational license search (www2.tceq.texas.gov/lic_dpa/index.cfm?fuseaction=licall.searchgp)
- TREC license holder search (trec.texas.gov/license-search)

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