

Accessory Dwelling FAQ

Required information about your property:

1. The size of your property (acreage)
2. How you get your water (public water system (PWS) or private domestic wellⁱ)
3. When your existing parcel was created
4. Where your current septic system is located
5. Any limiting factors, including easements, ponds, streams, ditches, etc.

Q: Can I build an accessory dwelling on my property that is served by septic system?

A: It depends on a variety of factors, including the size of your property, where your water comes from, and when your parcel was created. Minimum parcel sizes based on creation date are listed below. ⁱⁱ

- Prior to 10/19/72 and served by either a private domestic well or a PWS- no minimum acreage requirement
- From 10/19/72 to 03/21/91 and served by a PWS- minimum of one-third (1/3) acre per dwelling
- From 10/19/72 to 03/21/91 and served by a private domestic well- minimum of one (1) acre per dwelling
- From 03/21/91 to present and served by a private domestic well or a PWS- minimum of one (1) acre per dwelling

Q: Do I have to install a second septic system?

A: Yes. Each dwelling must have its own septic tank and leach field. A leach field may be shared by two dwellings on the same property if it is sized adequately for both. Two dwellings may not share a septic tank. ⁱⁱⁱ

Q: Do I have to meet setbacks with both systems?

A: Yes. You must meet all setbacks with both systems and repair areas. Required minimum setbacks can be found in Section 040.100, Table 2 of the [SWS Regs 2013-05-23](#). Oftentimes even if a parcel qualifies based on the parcel creation date, there is not enough room to meet all setbacks and the project will not be approved.

Q: Do I have to have another repair area?

A: Yes. Each septic system must have a repair area designated. This area must be the appropriate size, must meet all applicable setbacks, and must remain available and undeveloped. ^{iv} If existing system is not code compliant, two code compliant repair areas may be required.

Q: My property meets the acreage requirements, but I cannot install another septic system and meet all setbacks. Can I put an accessory dwelling on my property?

A: No. All setbacks must be met unless a specific variance is granted.

Q: Who classifies my project as an accessory dwelling versus something else (shop, garage, pool house, etc.)?

A: The appropriate Planning department makes that classification. WCHD will honor whatever classification the Planning department makes.

Q: Can I serve both dwellings with my domestic well?

A: The Washoe County Engineering Department oversees this. They can be reached at engineering@washoecounty.gov.

Q: I still have more questions about this. Who do I contact?

A: Call us at (775) 328-2434 Ext. 8, email us at healthehs@washoecounty.gov or visit us in person at the Environmental Health Services Office at 1001 E. Ninth Street, Building B, Reno, NV.

ⁱ If you receive a water bill, you are likely served by a public drinking water system (PWS). If you do not receive a water bill or are in an area not served by a PWS, you likely have a private domestic well.

ⁱⁱ Section 040.005-030; ⁱⁱⁱ Section 120.075(1); ^{iv} Section 040.040 of the [SWS Regs 2013-05-23](#)

