

Accessory Dwelling and Guest Quarters FAQ

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

A: It depends on a variety of factors, including the size of your property, where your current septic system is located and any limiting factors including easements, watercourses, etc. Each dwelling must have its own septic system and designated repair area, and the property must have a minimum of one acre per septic system.

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 according to the total volume of the tanks or the total number of bedrooms. If a leach field is sized for the total number of bedrooms, NNPH may require that the maximum allowable bedrooms between the two dwellings be recorded to the property.¹

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 1 of the [Sewage, Wastewater and Sanitation Regulations](#). Oftentimes even if a parcel qualifies based on the acreage, there is not enough room to meet all setbacks, and the project will not be approved. The regulations can be viewed at www.nnph.org/septic.

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.² 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 Planning department makes that classification. NNPH will honor whatever classification the Planning department makes.

Q: Can I build guest quarters?

A: If the Planning department designates a proposed accessory structure as a guest quarters, the existing septic system will be evaluated to ensure it is sized for the total bedroom count of all buildings. All setbacks with the associated connection of the accessory structure to the existing septic system must be met, and adequate code compliant repair area reserved.

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@nnph.org or visit us in person at the Environmental Health Services Office at 1001 E. Ninth Street, Building B, Reno, NV.

¹ Section 120.075 of the [SWS Regs](#)

² Sections 020.015 & 040.040 of the [SWS Regs](#)