

NEW MEXICO HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
Environmental Services Division

POLICY FOR  
INDIVIDUAL WATER SUPPLIES AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

Approved by New Mexico State Board of Public Health  
September 27, 1959

The development of fringe areas and subdivisions that do not have access to municipal water and sewage facilities is creating a continuously growing problem in proper protection of the public health in these areas. The situation has been accentuated due to the increased use of water, installation of garbage disposals and other automatic equipment, and the results of the high use of detergents. Septic tanks and leaching systems were never intended for use in closely built-up housing areas.

As a result of the above situations public health agencies are establishing minimum lot size requirements where individual water and/or sewage installations are concerned. Therefore, the New Mexico Health and Social Services Department has established a policy that is essentially in conformance with the recommendations of the American Public Health Association and also the American Society of Planning Officials.

Briefly, the policy for inspection or approval of all new subdivisions, including two or more lots, involving individual water and/or sewage installations by Health and Social Services Department personnel shall be based on the following minimum lot size requirements for each individual house:

- a. One-half acre (21,780 sq. ft.), or larger, where both a private water supply and a private sewage disposal system are to be located on the same lot.
- b. One-fourth acre (10,890 sq. ft.), or larger, where a public water supply is available but a private sewage disposal system is located on each lot.

It should be noted that the above policy requirements are minimum sizes of lots, as some conditions can very well require larger lots for adequate facilities.

The above policy on minimum lot sizes becomes effective January 1, 1960. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration (VA) should be contacted in regard to developments that have lot sizes already approved. City and county planning commissions, subdivision developers, real estate men, and surveyors and engineers should be notified of this policy.

Your attention is also called to the new "Minimum Property Standards for One and Two Living Units", by FHA. These are minimum standards that must be met for FHA and VA construction, that became effective on July 1, 1959. Copies of these standards (M.P.S.) will be sent to each sanitarian. As approval of individual water and sewer installations is required by the local health authority, request will be made to your office. This will cover both the approval forms and the new requirement for individual plot plan approval (See p. 6 of M.P.S.), that involves minimum distances and the location of private water and sewer installations, in addition to the minimum lot size.

The new FHA standards allow a minimum size of septic tank of 750 gallons for a two-bedroom house, a minimum size tank of 900 gallons for a three-bedroom house, 1,000 gallons for a four-bedroom house, and 250 gallons additional capacity for each bedroom over four. Although a minimum size of 750 gallons is required, it is recommended that 900 gallons be used, as additions to a two-bedroom house will make conformance with FHA and VA septic tank requirements difficult if a 750 gallon tank is installed.

The above septic tank sizes are identical with the recommendations in "Manual of Septic-Tank Practice", PHS publication No. 526. As uniformity of requirements is the aim of all concerned, a 750 gallon tank will be the minimum size approved by New Mexico Department of Public Health personnel. Changes in the State Uniform Plumbing Code are anticipated to complete this uniformity of control.

OCT 17 1986

