

Texas Homeowners Requesting To Do Their Own Maintenance

The Texas Legislature, in HB 2510 has mandated allowance for homeowners to be trained to do maintenance on their own system. The legislation reads as follows:

(h) If the owner of an on-site sewage disposal system using aerobic treatment for a single-family residence elects to maintain the system directly, the owner must obtain from the manufacturer or installer of the system an amount of on-site training specified by commission rule not to exceed six hours, either at the time of acceptance of the system from the installer or at the time of an on-site maintenance visit by a maintenance company under the initial term of the maintenance contract for the system, if applicable. The training must include instruction regarding the importance to public health and safety of proper maintenance of the system and a demonstration of the procedure for performing a scheduled maintenance. On the owner's completion of the training, the manufacturer or installer shall provide the owner with a certificate or letter stating that the owner has received the required training. An owner who elects to maintain the owner's system is subject to any inspection and reporting requirements imposed by an authorized agent or the commission under Subsection (k) applicable to a maintenance company that contracts to maintain a system. If the residence is sold, the new owner, not later than the 30th day after the date the owner takes possession of the property, must obtain the training required by this subsection from an installer certified by the manufacturer of the system under Subsection (n) or contract with a maintenance company for the maintenance of the system.

If you qualify with the above conditions, we suggest you contact your installer or maintenance company for training. They should be familiar with your system since they either completed your system installation or do the maintenance and are able to most effectively train you on your system. They must train you for the 6 hours as required by State law. After you have been trained by them, they will be able to assist you directly with concerns you have about your system, not Hoot at their central office.

The manufacturer of the system does not visit the system during the installation or maintenance visit, and therefore private training will result in higher fees. If you desire training directly by Hoot, this must be arranged with our office in Lake Charles, Louisiana by calling us at (337) 474-2804, and ask for Rebecca. We will then dispatch someone at a cost of \$995.00 plus transportation to and from your residence. This training will take place Monday thru Friday between the hours of 8:00AM to 5:00 PM and will take 6 hours to complete. Full payment for the class and transportation (mileage at 0.45 per mile, round trip) must be made to our office before the dispatch of our trainer to your location.

Before you proceed, please note the following:

Required in the initial price of the system is a mandatory 2 year warranty and service policy that should be provided to you at no charge. This is offered for your protection should any problems with the installation present themselves. If an installer offers to sell you a system without providing you the initial service policy and warranty, he is doing this contrary to State Law. You may be trained on the system at the time of acceptance from the installer, but if you are not provided the service and warranty coverage, you are not receiving what you paid for.

Your warranty is based on the system being both professionally installed and maintained. Repair parts are only provided under warranty by Hoot to a system that is installed and currently maintained by a factory authorized representative, not a trained homeowner. Your warranty will be null and void if your system is not being maintained under a service contract by a trained and qualified installer/service provider.

Installers who provide maintenance have a minimum of 60 hours professional instruction; have gone through a Registered Apprentice Program, then Installer I, Installer II and the Basic Maintenance Provider Course. These programs, when taken back to back, take a minimum of 3 years of experience to complete. It is ridiculous to think that a homeowner can be effectively taught and receive the experience necessary to mechanically, electrically, hydraulically and biologically troubleshoot, maintain, service and repair a system that takes years of training and experience to master.

When it comes to servicing your system, the person with years of experience that does the work every day, will have the advantage over any homeowner. An experienced maintenance provider can quickly identify potential problems and is knowledgeable about performing preventative maintenance instead of repairs. Not having parts on hand can make the difference between a simple adjustment or repair, and one that requires a pump out (at over \$300.00 on average) or damages other components that can run into the thousands of dollars to repair.

Service providers are required to stock parts and specialized tools to work on your system. They are trained on an annual basis and receive continuing education from both State qualified instructors and Hoot. If you do not have the right equipment and parts on hand, you will not be able to effectively maintain your system.

Hoot insists that anyone working in a Health Risk Environment such as with wastewater must be properly immunized. People working with wastewater are exposed to Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Cholera, Typhoid Fever, Dysentery, Gastroenteritis, Cryptosporidiosis, Amebiasis, Shigellosis and Polio. You need to be aware that some of these water borne diseases have no immunization available and some have some no known cure. Natural immunity can develop in individuals who are exposed over long periods of time. Therefore, we cannot in good faith recommend lay homeowners be trained in maintaining their system, potentially exposing themselves to these diseases.

Please be aware that with the acceptance of the maintenance of your system come the obligations of protecting the environment and waters of the State of Texas from pollution. You are required to do quarterly reporting of the condition of the system and make any and all repairs within 48 hours of a discovery of their problem. Failure to do so will result in the forfeit of your ability to service your own system along with other civil and administrative penalties.

Hoot offers training to homeowners through our Installers, Maintenance Providers and Factory Representatives at mandate of State Law, under extreme duress. Our Installers and Maintenance Providers have been threatened by the TCEQ with revocation of their license, and therefore their livelihood, if they fail to train homeowners to service their systems. Hoot has been threatened with the revocation of their product approvals with the TCEQ for failure to offer training as well. We believe this exceeds and overreaches the intent of the legislature; however we have no choice other than to comply.

Hoot is not responsible for any disease, illness, injury or, death, that occurs to any homeowner or other innocent victim because a homeowner elects to maintain their own system. Hoot does not feel that a homeowner can be effectively taught to maintain their system in any less time than the State requires of individuals who perform the service for hire.