



# Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## What is the Time of Sale or Transfer (TOST) Program?

### What is TOST?

The Time of Sale or Transfer (TOST) program is a regulation in Barry and Eaton counties overseen by the Barry-Eaton District Health Department (BEDHD). It says that properties with on-site wells and/or on-site septic (sewage) systems need to be checked when the property is sold or transferred to a new owner. These checks are done to make sure that wells and septic systems are not failed and do not require important maintenance.

### What are on-site wells and septic systems?

In some areas—especially rural areas—it's often not possible to have city water or city sewer hook-ups because properties are so far apart. Properties, both residential and commercial, in these areas might have their own well, which provides them with all the water they use, and their own septic system to manage waste. This includes all wastewater from sinks, showers, laundry, and toilets. Wells and septic systems that serve only one property are known as on-site wells and on-site septic systems.

### What is the purpose of TOST?

TOST was put into place to protect the health of our community and our environment. Drinking water from wells that are close to contamination sources or that are not properly built or maintained can endanger the health of everyone who drinks from and uses them. The very young, the elderly, and people with certain underlying health conditions, such as cancer, are especially at risk. Poorly constructed, unmanaged, damaged, or contaminated wells can allow bacteria (such as *E. coli*), chemicals, and other contaminants to enter the water that people use. These contaminants can lead to illness—including stomach and intestinal issues—in people.

Septic systems that are failed or missing important parts can allow untreated sewage to flow into groundwater, ponds, streams, rivers, and other bodies of water. This untreated sewage can contain bacteria, parasites, and viruses that can make humans and animals sick. When the untreated sewage enters the ground or nearby bodies of water, the health of many people can be impacted—even people who don't live on the property with failed septic system. This untreated sewage can make water used for activities such as swimming and fishing unsafe, and it can contaminate the groundwater that we all share.

### How does TOST work?

Once it is determined that a property with an on-site well and/or septic system is going to be sold or transferred, a Registered Evaluator will visit the property at the request of the buyer or seller. Registered Evaluators are independent persons approved and registered by BEDHD. The Registered Evaluator will examine the well and/or septic system and then send a report to BEDHD. BEDHD reviews these reports to see if there are issues that must be addressed. If BEDHD determines that there are major issues, it often visits the property, meets with the property owners, and proposes a plan to fix the problem(s). Once the problem(s) are

fixed, or if there were no corrections needed at all, BEDHD will issue a Transfer Authorization. A Transfer Authorization means that the sale or transfer of the property complies with the TOST Regulation.

The majority of properties that go through the TOST program do not have major issues with their systems. These properties are passed. Examples of systems that might need to be fixed can be found in the Evaluation Categories Guides on BEDHD's TOST website at <http://bit.ly/1W2laLz>. If a problem is found, sale or transfer of the property can still happen. In this case, the property owners and BEDHD will agree upon a corrective action plan to address the problem(s).

The TOST regulation does not stop the sale or transfer of a property. If a property is sold or transferred without a Transfer Authorization from BEDHD, the transfer is still legal. However, the seller may have violated TOST. In these cases, BEDHD works to get the seller's and the new owner's voluntary compliance with TOST. If voluntary compliance is not possible, BEDHD may take enforcement action.

A flow chart of the TOST process can be found at <http://bit.ly/29ti4Ah>.

### **In summary**

Having wells and septic systems that are maintained properly is very important to our community's health and the protection of our environment. The TOST program's goal is to make sure that on-site wells and septic systems are safe and properly maintained. This helps prevent diseases in humans and the contamination of the environment, especially the ponds, streams, rivers, and lakes that we all share. To help keep everyone in our community safe, property owners who are going to sell or transfer their property should plan ahead to start the TOST process early.

For more information on TOST and on-site wells and septic systems—including tips on how to keep your well and septic systems properly maintained—visit the Environmental Health section of [www.barryeatonhealth.org](http://www.barryeatonhealth.org) or contact one of the BEDHD offices.

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