

**DPS**Montgomery County
Department of Permitting Services2425 Reedie Dr 7th Floor

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Well and Septic Building Permit Guidelines for Additions/Improvements

An increase in habitable space to an existing dwelling served by a septic system must be evaluated for adherence to setback requirements and septic capacity. Regulations require DPS to certify the existing on-site sewage disposal system as capable of treating and disposing of the existing sewage flows, and any reasonable, foreseeable increase in sewage flows. The number of bedrooms, total enclosed living space and changes that affect the volume or character of the wastewater are considerations in making this determination.

Habitable Space is defined as any room for sleeping, living, cooking or dining purposes, excluding such places as closets, pantries, bath or toilet rooms, hallways, laundry, storage spaces, utility rooms and similar spaces, and excluding rooms which are not heated.

Bedroom is defined as any room designated as such and any other room, with closet space, which could be utilized as a private sleeping area, or any other room determined by the Approving Authority as capable of being used for sleeping purposes. Current criteria for determining a bedroom are: A room at least 70 sq. ft. in size with a closet, and egress window with a 5.7 sf. opening, 20" wide, opening height of 24", and not more than 44" above the floor.

Septic Reserve Area (SRA) is area approved for an initial septic system and at least two or three replacement systems (depending on when the lot was created and the sewer service category). The area must be supported by adequate water table and percolation test data.

Per COMAR 27A, approval of additions or alterations are subject to the following criteria:

Increases \leq 25 percent of the original habitable square footage of the existing structure*:

1. There is a septic permit record on file for the existing dwelling, and the proposed improvements meet all setback requirements.
2. For properties without an approved septic reserve area:
 - a. A *Habitable Space Worksheet* must be submitted confirming that the total increase is $<25\%$. Existing and proposed floor plans for the entire dwelling must be submitted with the worksheet. Contact Well and Septic staff for more information.

*An increase up to 25% is a one-time allowance and not considered cumulative.

Increases $>$ 25 percent of the original habitable square footage of the existing structure:

1. There is a septic permit record on file for the existing dwelling, and the proposed improvements meet all setback requirements
2. The property has an approved 10,000 sq. ft. SRA meeting all current standards.

Increases to number of bedrooms:

1. There is a septic system permit record on file, and the property has an approved 10,000 sq. ft. SRA for the total number of proposed bedrooms.
 - a. If necessary, a new septic permit must be obtained to upgrade or replace the existing septic system to accommodate the number of proposed bedrooms. Septic system upgrades must be completed prior to building permit approval.
 - b. If the SRA is inadequate, satisfactory water table and percolation tests must be completed to establish a 10,000 sq. ft. SRA to accommodate the number of proposed bedrooms.

If there is no septic permit record on file, then satisfactory water table and percolation tests must be completed to establish a 10,000 sq. ft. SRA, and installation of a new septic system is required prior to approval of any increase in habitable space or bedrooms. Required upgrades or replacement of a well or septic system must be completed prior to building permit approval.

Guest house, bedroom, or other habitable space in separate and detached buildings require separate on-site sewage disposal and on-site water supply systems. **For more details please refer to the guidance document on the DPS website titled 'Updates and clarification to plan review policy for accessory structures'.**