

## *SEPTIC TANK FORUM UPDATE*

A Septic Tank Forum was held at the FOWA Training Center on October 12, 2011. There were over 50 people in attendance. Concrete, fiberglass, and poly tanks were either represented by manufacturers or distributors. Local County Health Departments and Eberhard Roeder from the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) Bureau of Onsite Sewage Programs in Tallahassee attended to give insight from a regulatory perspective while septic tank contractors from across the state were present to discuss the benefits and challenges associated with tanks.

The topic of tanks has been an ongoing issue in Florida for several years and the purpose of the forum was to move the discussion forward. At several points the debate was heated, but the group addressed several concerns and has asked FOWA to represent the Onsite Industry at the next TRAP Meeting with the following recommendations.

1. Remove the Florida Department of Health as the testing party for new and restructured tank approvals.
  - a. Have testing conducted by a Florida PE with experience in the material(s) to be tested.
    - i. Typically a civil or structural engineer
    - ii. Must be independent of company completing the test
  - b. Research the possibility of a Florida University to become the testing mechanism.
  - c. Keep the FDOH as the organization responsible for approval, which would be based on independent, third party testing results.
2. All tanks must be tested to the current standard.
  - a. Give a specific date for completion of testing.
  - b. Inventory current stock in Florida prior to testing. Only those tanks already in inventory would be exempt.
3. Independent, third party data base to record tank information
  - a. Must be able to sort by various parameters.
    - i. Type, installer, soils, etc...
    - ii. Must contain ALL historical data
  - b. Use the current 64E-6 language to determine the definition of failure.
  - c. Add loss of original manufacturer design or shape to the failure definition.
  - d. Use this data base to determine if the approval of a specific tank needs to be reexamined based on data output.
4. Annual Inspections of ALL tank manufacturers (In State and Out of State)
  - a. If manufacturer is inspected by an independent, third party testing facility that meets or exceeds the Florida inspection process, then that report can be used.
    - i. Entire report must be submitted to FDOH on an annual basis.
  - b. State employees conducting the inspection **MUST** be trained properly and conduct a complete inspection as required by 64E-6.
    - i. Given the various types of tanks in Florida additional training for each medium will be required.

One unilateral point came forth during this meeting. There will NOT be an easy “fix” to this issue. Many challenges will come forth as we move forward. There will be more heated discussions, but as an industry we need to move forward to ensure that the tanks we permit, install, and require to treat one-third (1/3) of Florida’s wastewater can be relied on to perform as designed.