



***Christopher Deakins is an InterNACHI Certified Septic Inspector, and Deakins Home Inspections LLC can perform Septic System Dye Testing if this is something that your lender may require. However we always suggest that you hire a Septic System Contractor that specializes exclusively in septic systems to perform a complete and comprehensive evaluation if you want to be certain of the system's integrity.***

***The following pages from [InspectApedia.com](http://InspectApedia.com) are offered to our Clients for information purposes only, so that they may be properly educated on both the benefits, and the limitations of Dye Testing, and what a complete Septic Inspection actually consists of.***

### **PERFORMING a SEPTIC DYE TEST - How to Properly Conduct a Septic Loading and Dye Test**



Septic System Loading and Dye Tests, often requested by certain lenders, involve flushing a special dye down a toilet or other drain combined with a known quantity of water sufficient to put a working load on the absorption system.

If waste water leaks to the ground surface (an unsanitary condition indicating serious septic failure) one may find dye in that water provided the septic system is flowing at common rates.

Dyed effluent usually appears in 20-30 minutes on a failed system but can take up to five days to show up. If at a building inspection suspect wet areas are observed, a dye test is recommended even if one was not previously requested.

When wet areas are not found (or created by running water into the septic system) on the property being inspected, dye tests may still be performed to meet requirements of some lenders.

Although this test can often find a costly failure it does not find all possible problems. So by itself a dye test is not indicative of the complete condition of the system. On the other hand, so many failed systems have been found with this procedure that it can be worth performing.

**Watch out:** Anyone inspecting septic systems **MUST** be familiar with the hazards and safety concerns discussed at [SEPTIC SYSTEM SAFETY WARNINGS](#)

Septic dye tests involve flushing a special florescent dye down a toilet or other drain. The dye itself does not make anything happen. It is simply a colored indicator that can identify water found outside as having come from the fixture where the dye was introduced.

**It's the volume of water introduced into the system that forms the actual "test"**. If waste water is coming to the surface (an unsanitary condition indicating serious septic failure) one may see dye in that water, provided the septic system is flowing at common rates.

**When suspect wet areas are observed**, if the system has no maintenance history, if the area is known to have problem soils, or if other historic or site conditions raise question about the condition of the system then it is recommended that the inspector perform a dye test.

A septic loading and dye test will by no means find every septic failure, but this method finds many failures that otherwise are unnoticed by a home buyer until shortly after moving in. Septic loading and dye tests are complimentary to and should precede any further inspection steps taken such as pumping the septic tank.

### **WHEN TO PUMP THE SEPTIC TANK - After, not Before Septic Tests are Performed**

*After* a loading and dye test (which primarily tests the absorption system, leach field, or drain field), unless the septic tank has been pumped very recently, it is recommended that this additional step be taken.

Before completing the purchase of a property with a septic tank and absorption system, limited but important additional information regarding the condition of the system tank and also the leach field may be obtained by having a septic contractor open, clean, and inspect the septic tank itself.

Particularly in the case of older systems that have not been serviced, if the property owner will permit this step then it is recommended. When the tank is pumped, ask the pumping contractor to describe the size, type, and condition of the tank and its components, and also to tell you if they saw any indications that the system needs repair or that the tank or leach system are at or near the end of their life.

Do not permit the septic tank to be pumped *before* the septic loading and dye test - that will prevent a valid test of the system and in particular, prevents loading of the drain field. More details about the problem of septic tank pump outs as a cover-up of a septic problem or failure are at [Don't Pump Before Testing Septic Systems](#) : warnings for home buyers about septic tank pumping.

The links given below describe the details of how to perform a septic loading and dye test, procedures, observations, water quantity, and septic dye quantity.

**Continue reading** at [SEPTIC TEST PRE-CHECKS](#) or select a topic from the More Reading links shown below.

### **Suggested citation for this web page**

[SEPTIC LOADING & DYE TEST PROCEDURE](#) at [InspectApedia.com](#) - online encyclopedia of building & environmental inspection, testing, diagnosis, repair, & problem prevention advice.

### **More Reading**

**INDEX to RELATED ARTICLES:** [ARTICLE INDEX to SEPTIC SYSTEMS](#)