



Septic Tank Elimination Program (STEP)

Frequently Asked Questions

Septic Tank Elimination Program Basics

What is STEP?

STEP is Citizens Energy Group's program to extend sewers to areas currently served by a septic system.

How does STEP work?

Citizens constructs new sewers in neighborhoods as part of STEP and leaves a lateral stub for each property along the sewer route. When the sewers are complete, property owners abandon their septic tanks and install a pipe connecting the line from their home/business to the lateral stub provided by Citizens. Property owners pay a one-time connection fee and are responsible for private property construction costs associated with connecting their homes to the sanitary sewer. Citizens Energy Group is responsible for all construction costs within the public right-of-way, which includes the sewer main and the lateral stub to each property.

How does Citizens determine when my neighborhood gets sewers?

Projects are prioritized based on several criteria, three of which are: septic system failure rates, housing densities and proximity to a floodplain.

Paying for New Sewers

My property is scheduled for sewers next year. Does this new program mean I will get a free sewer?

No. You will need to hire a licensed and bonded general contractor or plumber to connect your home to the new sewer main, and you will be responsible for paying a connection fee before you can connect.

How much will the new sewers cost me?

As a homeowner, you have three main costs to connect to the sewer:

1. The construction costs on your property. The costs include hiring a contractor to abandon your septic

tank and install a sewer lateral from your home to the sewer main constructed by Citizens. Costs for these services are approximately \$2,000 to \$5,000 but vary by property.

2. A sewer connection fee. The current connection fee is \$2,530 for a single-family home. You pay the sewer connection fee in one lump sum or over five years if you qualify for the STEP Financial Assistance Plan.
3. Your monthly sewer bill.

How do I pay the connection fee?

Citizens Energy Group requires that the sewer connection fee and any other permitting fees and charges be paid before construction permits are issued. The connection fee must be paid before you can connect to the sewer system. If the connection fee is not included in your contractor's bid for the work (the other permitting fees and charges are typically included in contractors' bids), then you may pay the connection fee to Citizens Energy Group directly by using one of the methods described below.

1. Pay in person. If you choose this payment option, you must make arrangements with your contractor when you hire him or her to do the work. Make your payment in person at Citizens Energy Group, 2020 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Your contractor must have already applied for a permit before you make your payment. Permitting applications may be completed by your contractor online at www.CitizensEnergyGroup.com/Permits or by calling (317) 927-4328. A permit will not be issued until the connection fee is paid.

Cash, personal checks and money orders are accepted, as well as Visa and MasterCard with a valid photo ID. Checks and money orders must be made payable to Citizens Energy Group.

2. Homeowners may also apply to participate in the STEP Financial Assistance Plan. Citizens Energy Group offers the Financial Assistance Plan to help lower-income residents in STEP project areas pay the connection fee over time.

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What is the STEP Financial Assistance Plan, and how do I qualify?

The Financial Assistance Plan is not a loan. It is an installment plan that allows qualified residents to pay \$50 per month toward the connection fee and general administrative fees over 60 months (five years). The Financial Assistance Plan only covers the connection fee and does not include the construction cost to abandon your septic tank and install your lateral. A resident with no dependents that has an annual gross household income at or below \$46,050 may be eligible for the plan. Additionally, residents will receive a credit of \$3,700 for each household dependent. For more information on the Financial Assistance Plan or to request an application, call (317) 927-4328.

Connecting To The New Sewer

Can I connect to the sewer if and when I want to?

No. The Marion County Health Department requires you to connect to the new sewer system within six months of notice that the new sewers are ready for connection. You will receive a notice from Citizens Energy Group and the Marion County Health Department when you can connect. Chapter 14 of The Code of the Health and Hospital Corporation of Marion County mandates that any residential property within 100 feet of a sewer must connect.

My property is already connected to a sewer, yet Citizens is putting new sewers along my street. Will I have to connect to that new sewer?

It depends. If you are legally connected to a sanitary sewer and currently paying sewer user fees, your property may be exempt from connecting to the new sewer. However, if your connection is to an interceptor (one of the main sewer arteries) or you have no documentation of a legal connection, you may be required to connect to the new sewer. Required connections are reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that connections meet Citizens Energy Group's standards.

I think my property is connected, but I have never received a sewer bill. What do I do?

A dye test of your property can be conducted to see if the property is connected to a sanitary sewer. If you are connected but not receiving a sewer bill, you will begin receiving a bill. Call (317) 927-4328 for more information.

If I am responsible for connecting my property, how do I arrange for the hookup?

You must hire a licensed and bonded general contractor or plumber to do the work. The Department of Code Enforcement keeps a list of licensed contractors which can be found at www.CitizensEnergyGroup.com/Contractors. Information on how to hire a licensed contractor will also be available at STEP public meetings.

Why can't Citizens connect my property to the sewer since it's already laying pipe in my neighborhood? Why does it stop at the right-of-way?

Citizens Energy Group does not provide this service because the connection would be on private property.

We own a duplex/double (both sides of a house/condo). Will we be allowed just one connection?

No. You will need a connection for both sides of the building. Citizens does not allow the sharing of laterals or connections, so one lateral stub is made available for each property that needs to connect. Two connection fees also will be charged since there are two units.

We recently remodeled our separate garage to create living quarters above it. Can we tap the garage into our house and have one connection?

No. You will need to connect each structure separately to the sewer. Citizens Energy Group standards do not allow common or shared laterals. Two connection fees also will be charged since there are two units.

For More Information

Visit www.CitizensEnergyGroup.com/STEP to learn more about connection fees, the Financial Assistance Plan, contractor costs and choosing a contractor. Call (317) 927-4328 for information on when Citizens will construct sewers in specific neighborhoods.