

Frequently Asked Questions – Operation and Maintenance (O&M) portal (My Health Department) for Environmental Health Database

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) replaced its legacy environmental health data management system, the Virginia Environmental Information System (VENIS). VENIS, implemented in 2003, is an IBM Domino-based product, but the technology is outdated and the functionality no longer supports the needs and standards of VDH. VDH signed a contract with HealthSpace to develop and implement a new cloud-based enterprise system, which is called Environmental Health Database (EHD). This system is for internal use and allows, among many other features, simultaneous data input from all users in multiple jurisdictions to create permits, inspection reports, invoices, receipts, attach documents, and allow search and export of selected data. Nearly every program administered by VDH through the Office of Environmental Health Services will utilize EHD. Receiving O&M report submissions via an external facing portal is just one of the many features of this internal system. On June 11, 2020, VDH hosted a web-based training event for licensed Onsite Sewage System Operators on how to use the new O&M report submission portal version 2.0 (v2.0). This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document addresses questions received during and immediately after the training.

Q: Are we required enter the HDID number for systems we report on?

A: Reports do not require HDID numbers as the new O&M portal v2.0 does not rely on the HDID number. O&M reports will be linked to septic system documents in the VDH database by VDH EH staff, using the address provided by operators.

Q: What happens if a local health department rejects our report?

A: Operators can view the status, whether approved or rejected, in the “Recent Submissions” panel after logging into the O&M v2.0 website (<https://myhealthdepartment.com/virginia>). Local health department staff may contact the operators to discuss the rejection of a report, or an operator may choose to contact the appropriate local health department to get clarification.

Q: When selecting an “Outcome of Visit” related to a pumpout, what does “exempt” mean?

A: Options for the septic tank pumpout outcome mirror the options for pumpout requirements with the Chesapeake Bay Protection Act. Selecting “exempt” indicates the system is exempt from those requirements (e.g. an effluent filter is installed). For further clarification, please contact local health department EH staff.

Q: The new O&M portal v2.0 does not have database capabilities.

A: The O&M portal was not intended to have database capabilities. Due to vast and frequent changes in technology and business needs, portals and databases are defined in many ways. For the purposes of this FAQ, these terms are explained as below: A portal is a web-based platform that can be accessed via unique user credentials that collects information from different users into a single user interface, by displaying selected content to the user. A database is an organized collection of structured and interconnected information, or data, controlled by a database management system with the ability to store, update and retrieve data. The new O&M portal v2.0 is linked to the VDH internal database to allow for O&M data input, but the O&M portal itself is not a database. Consistent with the VENIS portal, the new O&M portal v2.0 is only designed to function as a data entry and report submission tool.

Q: Will there be enhancements to the O&M portal v2.0 capabilities?

A: VDH will be forming a small focus group, consisting of licensed O&M operators and VDH staff, to discuss possible enhancements to the O&M portal v2.0 and assess the feasibility of developing such functionalities.

Q: We use Online RME/Carmody. When and how can we submit the O&M reports to VDH?

A: We are working with these two companies to develop an interface between those systems and the new O&M portal v2.0. Both Online RME and Carmody confirmed that they have the capability to hold the reports in their respective data repository systems for now. During this transition period, users of these two data systems are not expected to complete double data entry or be penalized for failing to submit timely O&M reports to VDH.

Q: How will the enforcement action against the home owners be handled during this transition?

A: VDH does not contemplate sending enforcement letters to homeowners at this time. Our focus is ensuring the interface between Online RME and Carmody is developed; completing as many changes as the system allows based on user feedback; and pushing out revisions to the users.

Q: Who should I contact for more information about interpreting or understanding the O&M portal v2.0 dropdown lists and data entry fields?

A: Please refer to the O&M portal v2.0 training guide and training video posted on <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/onsite-sewage-water-services-updated/>. If these tools do not answer your questions, please contact your local health department EH staff.

Q: Who should I contact for more information about the O&M portal v2.0 functionality?

A: Please refer to the O&M portal v2.0 training guide and training video posted on <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/onsite-sewage-water-services-updated/>. If these tools do not answer your questions, please send all your questions and feedback to ehadministrators@vdh.virginia.gov mailbox. This is a dedicated mailbox for communication with internal and external users of the VDH database and O&M portal, including the operators.

Q: How will I know if VDH has released any new information about the O&M portal?

A: Please check one of the two VDH websites (<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/onsite-sewage-water-services-updated/> or <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/information-for-onsite-system-service-providers/>) to get the most recent copy of the FAQs and O&M portal users resources.