



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104  
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

[www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)

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## Environmental inspections underway in Weiss Lake area of Cherokee County

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### CONTACT:

Fred Vengrouskie  
(334) 850-1510

The Alabama Department of Public Health is conducting inspections of dwellings, establishments, and permanent or long-term placement recreational vehicles located within the Alabama Power Company flood easement around Weiss Lake in Cherokee County.

Owners in this area must obtain an annual permit for the installation and use of a sewage holding tank. This permit requirement, which became effective July 9, 2012, applies to dwellings and establishments that do not have access to a sanitary sewer system.

"We have dispatched additional environmental health staff from around the state to address the enforcement of these local regulations," State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said. "Our goal is to work with owners to inform them about the requirements to stop illegal discharge into and around Weiss Lake."

Fred Vengrouskie, onsite survey officer with the state's Bureau of Environmental Services, and four employees from adjoining counties have been assigned to identify problems and have issued 21 violation citations so far.

"The public needs to be aware that penalties will be imposed for those who do not comply with this requirement within a 30-day period," Vengrouskie said. "Equipment has been ordered and personnel will be processing applications and issuing notices. We expect to build up to 100 inspections per week by February."

The purpose of the requirement is to protect the public's health by minimizing the adverse health effects of improper sewage disposal into Weiss Lake. Sewage contamination poses both a health and an environmental threat. Sewage holding tanks must comply with structural, placement and pumping requirements in local rules.

A dwelling or establishment located on a lot within the Alabama Power Company's flood easement which does not have access to a public or private sewerage system must have a holding tank permitted by the Cherokee County Health Department. If a public or private sewerage system is available to a dwelling or establishment on a lot, the owner must connect to the system.

A dwelling is defined as "a house, manufactured home or house trailer, shelter, structure, or building or portion thereof, that is or could reasonably be expected to be occupied in whole or in part as the home, residence, or sleeping place of one or more persons." An establishment is a facility, other than a dwelling that generates sewage, including offices, work places or food service establishments.

If a dwelling or establishment has been built or located on a recreational lot within the flood easement, regardless of how often it is used, it must have an approved means of sewage disposal. Applicants for permits must contract with a pumper licensed by the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board to pump the holding tank on a regular basis. The pumping schedule will depend upon the frequency of use of the dwelling or establishment and water usage.

For more information, including permit requirements and fees, please contact the Cherokee County Health Department, (256) 927-3132, or visit the Cherokee County Health Department Website: <http://www.adph.org/chokeee/>.

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