

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Commissioner



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Circular Letter EHS #2015-29

Date: July 9, 2015

TO: Directors of Health
Chief Sanitarians
Code Advisory Committee
CT Septic Tank Pre-casters

FROM: Robert W. Scully
Supervising Sanitary Engineer
Environmental Engineering Program

RE: Sewage Tank Covers, Risers & Safety Devices

The Department published a new revision of the *Technical Standards for Subsurface Sewage Disposal Systems* (Technical Standards) on January 1, 2015 that include new access requirements for sewage tanks. The access provisions apply to septic tanks, pump chambers, grease interceptor tanks, and holding tanks. The purpose of these revisions is to provide a secondary safety measure for sewage tanks when the original tank cover is being removed and a riser assembly is utilized. As plastic riser and cover assemblies are more commonly used, the removal of the original concrete sewage tank cover has become more of a concern. Some riser covers can be susceptible to cracking, fail from heavy point loads or may be dislodged if not secured properly to the riser assembly. Use of a secondary safety lid or device can help prevent a person from falling into a sewage tank when the riser cover accidentally fails or dislodges.

Tank safety has received more attention nationally as a number of children have sustained serious or fatal injuries from falls into septic tanks. In an effort to reduce this hazard, the Technical Standards now recommend that tank covers be left on the tank for safety reasons when riser assemblies are utilized over sewage tank access or cleanout openings. In those instances where a riser cover weighs less than 59 pounds, the sewage tank cover must remain on the tank, or a secondary safety lid or device must be provided beneath the riser cover. Please note that the installation of a secondary safety lid or device is a requirement in these instances. Leaving tank covers in place also helps to avoid potential odor problems.



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Sewage tank access safety devices can be either a secondary cover on the tank access opening, or a product manufactured and sold as a safety device that is installed below the riser cover. This requirement applies to both new and existing sewage tanks. If a riser cover on a riser assembly is a heavy cover that weighs 59 or more pounds, it is still recommended that the sewage tank cover remain in place. Although a secondary safety lid or device is not required if the sewage tank cover is removed and a heavy riser cover is provided, we encourage the use of a secondary safety device.

In addition, since January 1st of 2000, language in the Technical Standards requires that all new and existing septic tanks that exceed a depth of 12 inches below grade be retrofitted with a riser and cover assembly such that the top of the riser assembly is no more than 12 inches below grade. Risers to grade help facilitate tank pumping and inspection. The Technical Standards also require that all pump chambers, grease interceptor tanks, and holding tanks have watertight riser manholes extended to grade. Property owners should contact their licensed sewage tank cleaner or installer for more information on options to help comply with these requirements.

CC: Suzanne Blancaflor, M.S., M.P.H., Chief, Environmental Health Section, DPH
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