

Sections of Hamilton Board of Health regulation: Septic System Access Covers, adopted February 2014

3. Definitions

Light Duty Cover – 24” diameter (minimum) cover that weighs less than 75 pounds, is designed and constructed for non-vehicular traffic

Medium Duty Cover – 24” diameter (minimum) cover (typically weighs approximately 75 pounds) and is designed and constructed to withstand H-10 load criteria at a minimum.

Heavy Duty Cover – 24” diameter (minimum) cover (typically weighs approximately 115 pounds) and is designed and constructed to withstand H-20 load criteria at a minimum.

4. Access Covers

- 4.1. In order to decrease the risk of a person or animal falling into a septic tank (or similarly dangerous septic component, e.g. pump chamber, holding tank, cesspool, treatment tank, leach pit, dry well) the following regulation is enacted. Light-duty access covers that require bolts or screws (or similar) to secure the cover from unauthorized access, and where the bolts/screws are detachable, are generally not allowed, unless they meet the exceptions described below. The rationale for this regulation is that bolts/screws can be misplaced leaving the cover unsecured.
- 4.2. Access covers shall be minimum Medium Duty, typically made of concrete, stone, or cast iron. However, Light Duty covers are allowed under the following conditions:
 - a) Light Duty covers that are secured to the frame by means of bolts, screws or similar that cannot be detached from the cover. Cam-Lock or Roto-Lock are acceptable examples of non-detachable means of securing covers.
 - b) Light Duty covers that are secure *without* the use of bolts are allowed. For example, plastic covers in which the entire cover turns and screws into the tank or riser (e.g. certain poly tanks) are allowed.
 - c) Light Duty covers with detachable bolts are allowed only if:
 - i) the tank is filled with sand, stone, or other filter media that are capable of supporting a 250 lbs point load, or
 - ii) the passage into the tank is blocked by equipment or other structures would keep a small child from falling into the tank, and is capable of supporting a 250 lbs point load.
- 4.3. In order to prevent access covers from flipping over when stepped on, cast iron covers shall have the following:
 - a) inside horizontal lip shall be smaller than the cover by a minimum of 1.5” diameter (3/4” radius)
 - b) vertical lip height shall be a minimum of 50% greater than the thickness of the outside edge of the cover.
- 4.4. Effective immediately, all non-conforming covers shall be retrofitted with a safety grate or be replaced with a conforming cover. Licensed septic haulers are required to inform customers of this requirement at the time of pump out. At the time of a septic pump-out, the Pumper shall note the status of all covers observed on a form provided by the Board of Health.
- 4.5. At the time of a Title 5 septic system inspection, the inspector shall note the status of all covers on a form provide by the Board of Health, titled “Addendum to Title 5 Report”.
- 4.6. In order for a septic system to “pass” a Title 5 inspection at the time of transfer, all non-conforming covers shall be brought to code. If a cover is replaced it must be affixed to the riser in a secure manner. A licensed Installer must perform the work and submit a “Notification Form” in lieu of a permit.

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TO: Title 5 Inspectors, Licensed Septic Installers, and Septic Designers
RE: Access Cover requirements for Title 5 inspections and Septic Designs in Hamilton
DATE: March 2014
FROM: Leslie Whelan, Health Agent

The Hamilton Board of Health revised its septic system regulations in February 2014 (enclosed). This letter describes the "Access Covers" section of the regulation for Title 5 inspections and plans.

Enclosed are two new forms:

- (1) Addendum to Title 5 Inspection Report - Condition of Covers, for Title 5 Inspectors to use with inspection report.
- (2) Notification Form – Repair or Replacement of Septic System Covers, for use when an Installer repairs or replaces a cover or riser.

The Access Covers regulation is on the reverse of these forms.

Major points for Title 5 Inspectors, Septic Installers and Designers:

- a. Our intention is to keep people from falling into septic tanks (or similar), thereby saving lives.
- b. In order for a septic system to pass a Title 5 inspection, the Board of Health requires non-conforming covers to be repaired or replaced (by a Septic Installer).
- c. Septic designs must specify access covers in conformance with the enclosed regulations.

A few questions answered:

1. What is a typical example of a "non-conforming" cover?
Answer: A light duty plastic cover with detachable bolts.
2. Do all covers need to be cast iron?
Answer: No. Stone and concrete covers are allowed (75lbs or greater). Light Duty covers are allowed under certain conditions.
3. When are Light Duty covers (less than 75 lbs) allowed?
Answer:
 - a. When the bolts are not detachable, such as Cam-Lock or Roto-Lock, or
 - b. When the cover is on top of a tank that is filled with a medium which supports the weight of a person (250 lbs). (e.g. treatment tank filled with sand or foam cubes), or
 - c. When the passage into the tank is blocked by equipment or other structures would keep a small child from falling into the tank, and is capable of supporting a 250 lbs point load, or
 - d. When the entire cover turns and screws into place (e.g. some poly tank covers with threaded grooves around the circumference; these covers are not easy to remove).

4. Do all covers need to be at grade?

Answer: No, most covers don't need to be at grade. This regulation does not require below grade covers brought to grade. Typically covers should be at-grade over a pump, treatment tank, or effluent filter; however this regulation is not requiring those covers be brought to grade.

5. Must all covers be bolted?

Answer: No; bolts are not necessarily required. Medium Duty covers do not require bolts.

6. When must bolts be used?

Answer: Standard Light Duty covers must be bolted, typically with non-detachable bolts. However there are exceptions. See question 3 above or section 4.2 of the regulation.

7. What about safety grates?

Answer: They are required immediately for all non-conforming covers; Pumpers are required to inform clients of this requirement. However, at the time of a Title 5 inspection (and septic upgrade) non-conforming covers must be repaired or replaced to conform.

More questions, please ask me. Thank you for your cooperation and for helping make septic systems safer!

I highly recommend before repairing or replacing a cover, that the Health Agent be given time to review the Title 5 Addendum (including time for discussion with the Inspector +/- Installer) in order to make a determination whether the cover needs to be repaired/replaced, or not.