

Below are sections of the Rockport Board of Health septic system regulations pertaining to Covers at Grade, adopted October 2012.

3. Definitions

Light weight covers – less than 90 lbs

Medium duty covers – **90 lbs minimum** weight and is secure from unauthorized access.

8. Covers at Grade

8.1. 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-weight covers that require bolts or screws (or similar) to secure the cover from unauthorized access, are not allowed. The rationale for this regulation is that people do not reliably replace the bolts/screws.

8.2. Covers at grade shall be cast iron, minimum "medium duty", whether bolts are present or not. (Bolts are not required.) Inside horizontal lip shall be smaller than the cover by a minimum of 1.5" diameter (3/4" radius). Vertical lip height shall be a minimum of 50% greater than the thickness of the outside edge of the cover.

8.3. Exceptions for *continued or future* use of light-weight, bolted covers can be made if the tank is filled with sand, stone, or other filter media that would support 250 lbs.

(Section 8.4 does not apply at time of Title 5 inspection)

8.4. Exceptions for *continued use* of light-weight, bolted covers can be made if a safety grate is installed. However, light-weight, bolted covers cannot be *newly installed*, even with the use of safety grates, unless 8.3 is met above.

(Section 8.5 does not apply at time of Title 5 inspection)

8.5. Effective immediately, all non-conforming covers shall be retrofitted with a safety grate. Licensed septic haulers are required to inform customers of this requirement at the time of pump out.

8.6. At the time of a Title 5 septic system inspection, the inspector shall note the status of all covers to grade on a form provide by the Board of Health, and **all non-conforming covers shall be retrofitted with a medium-duty cover that is affixed to the riser in a secure manner.**

8.7. Light-weight 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.

8.8. Below-grade access covers shall be pre-cast concrete and have minimum depth of 9" soil coverage.



Rockport Board of Health

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TO: Title 5 Inspectors and Licensed Septic Installers
RE: Cover at-grade requirements for Title 5 inspections in Rockport
DATE: February 7, 2013
FROM: Leslie Whelan, Health Agent

The Rockport Board of Health recently revised its septic system regulations (enclosed). This letter is meant to help you understand the new requirements, specifically: covers at-grade during Title 5 inspections.

Enclosed are two new forms, (1) for use during Title 5 Inspections and (2) when an Installer replaces a cover or riser over a septic tank (or similar component).

The covers at-grade section of the regulation is difficult to understand if you are reading it for the first time. It is much easier to understand after you have had it explained, which I will try to do here. I encourage you to also ask me to explain in person, or on the phone. I promise it will be much easier to understand. You can also email me at lwhelan@town.rockport.ma.us

Major points for Title 5 Inspectors and Septic Installers to understand about the regulation:

- a. The intention is to keep people from falling into septic tanks (or similar), thereby saving lives.
- b. Light-weight covers (often made of plastic and require bolts to be secure from unauthorized access) are only safe if the bolts are properly attached. Bolts are not always replaced or securely attached to the riser; therefore, at-grade covers that are light weight might be easily removed by a child who could then fall into the tank.
- c. In order for a septic system to pass a Title 5 inspection, the Board of Health now requires non-conforming covers to be replaced.
- d. Enclosed is a form for Title 5 Inspectors to report the condition of septic system covers. See enclosed: "Addendum to Title 5 Inspection Report: Condition of Covers-at-Grade"
- e. In order to comply with the regulation, at the time of a Title 5 inspection, whenever a cover-at-grade is non-conforming, then a licensed Septic Installer needs to replace the cover (and riser, if needed) and submit the enclosed "Notification Form" to the Board of Health.

A few questions answered:

1. What is a typical example of a "non-conforming" cover at-grade?
 - A. Usually plastic and over a septic tank, pump chamber, cesspool, or leach pit. Read on to see when these light weight covers are allowed...

2. When can a cover that is less than 90 lbs pass a Title 5 inspection?
 - a. When the cover is on top of a tank that is filled with a medium which is sufficiently firm to support the weight of a person (250 lbs). For example, a treatment tank filled with sand or foam cubes.
 - b. When the entire cover turns and screws into place (e.g. some poly tanks have this type of cover with threaded screw grooves around the circumference; these covers are not easy to remove).
3. In order to pass a Title 5 inspection, when an "at-grade" cover is located over a septic tank, pump chamber, cesspool or leach pit, it must be _____?
A: Cast iron & medium duty. *(Medium duty = 90 lbs minimum weight)*
4. Do the medium duty, cast iron manhole covers currently supplied by Shea Concrete comply with the "covers at-grade" regulation?
A: Yes.
5. To comply with the regulation, must covers at-grade be bolted?
A: No; bolts are not required. Cast iron, medium duty manhole covers are typically "secure from unauthorized access" by virtue of their weight and the need for tools to lift it.
6. Must the riser be replaced whenever the cover is replaced?
A: It's possible that a plastic riser will always need to be replaced with a concrete riser in order to properly attach a metal cover. However, the regulation simply states that the medium duty cover be "affixed to the riser in a secure manner". At this point, we are relying upon licensed septic installers to make the determination how to affix the metal rim to a riser in a secure manner. If in the future we learn that metal rims are not reliably secured unless the entire plastic riser is replaced with a concrete riser, then we will clarify and state that. But for now, we are open to the possibility that installers may find a way to affix a metal rim to a plastic riser in a secure manner.
7. When must a cover be located "at-grade" and not buried?
A: Covers need to be at-grade over pumps and effluent filters. Effluent filters are recommended, but are only required before a pump.
8. Are below-grade covers allowed?
A: Yes, below-grade covers are allowed when there is no effluent filter or pump below the cover. "Below-grade" covers should be reinforced concrete.
9. What about safety grates?
A: For existing septic systems that are not having a Title 5 inspection, non-conforming covers at-grade are required to have a \$20 safety grate installed. Pumpers are being informed about the safety grate requirement and the BOH is encouraging pumpers to make these grates available to their customers. However, at the time of a Title 5 inspection, safety grates are not enough to comply with this regulation, so covers (and risers, if needed) will need to be replaced in order for a septic system to pass a Title 5 inspection.

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