



Hidden Dangers

SEPTIC TANK LID SAFETY

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Lethal Lids

We take precautions to protect ourselves and the ones we love in many aspects of life. For example, seatbelts in the car, helmets on a bicycle, life vests on a boat, and a leash for the dog. Unfortunately the closer to home, the more often it's overlooked. Your own backyard can be a danger zone for adults, children and pets if precautions aren't taken. Kids fall into unsafe septic tanks every year, and many times the outcome is fatal. Exposed tanks are the main culprit along with unsecured or eroded lids.

Real Stories:

In Montana, a 3-year-old boy went missing from his home. His parents and the police searched for days around the town and neighboring areas, but it wasn't until they drained the tank that they found his body. The autopsy performed in Missoula exposed the cause of death – drowning. If the lid had been securely fastened or a safety unit was in place, the tragic incident would not have occurred.

Man's best friend is also at risk when precautions aren't taken. Most dogs are let out in the backyard unattended, and all too often they disappear. Owners assume the dogs got out and ran away, but sometimes they are closer than you think. Dogs often sniff around the septic tank area or run speedily through the yard; if your tank lid isn't secure, these poor pups will wind up in the tank.

Real Stories:

Earlier this year, Benny, a 4-year-old Wheaten Terrier from Toronto went missing from his owner's yard. The owner was very confused as to where he ran off to and began calling out for Benny. Lucky for Benny, his owner heard faint barks coming from the ground and found her four-legged boy in the septic tank. He fell in when a large crack emerged in the lid; the owner thought nothing of it knowing she could easily avoid the area. Now she routinely inspects her yard and makes sure everyone is safe.

Children and pets are definitely more susceptible to accidents, but adults are also at risk. Septic tanks that are 6 or 7 feet deep are especially dangerous because they hold enough water for an adult to easily drown. The deep fall can also cause a head injury and loss of consciousness, increasing risk of tragedy. Septic tanks also have a large amount of methane gas; in a confined space like a tank, exposure is all the more dangerous. Being trapped in a septic tank is more than a bad experience, and is an easily avoidable disaster.

Making sure your septic tank is safe and secure is a great way to keep your backyard safe. Ask to have a safety screen installed. Also make sure your septic tank cover is secured with safety screws. Always be careful when repairing or inspecting your tank, and never travel inside without proper gear.

More Than a Mess

Falling in a septic tank seems like a gross mess to get out of, and most people think that it doesn't pose a *real* danger. As previously outlined, the fall alone can be enough to cause great injury and possibly death. However, just going in is very dangerous no matter how careful you think you are being. The major danger here is: METHANE GAS.

Septic tanks are full of methane gas and just a small intake in your lungs can prove fatal. The following story of a father and son is sad but true:

In Long Island, methane gas claimed the lives of a father and son who were innocently working on their tank at home. Thinking they were safe in a pair, and that their height made it impossible to drown, the two men walked into their death. Aged 27 and 57, the two men succumbed to the fumes and were found unconscious in waste. Attempts were made to revive the men with CPR, but they were pronounced dead at the scene.

The True Cost

A common excuse among those who don't take safety precautions by purchasing a lid or safety screen is cost. A good lid can be made available for under \$50, and a safety screen for under \$25 provides an extra layer of protection. Skipping on one so you can save a few bucks could cost you thousands in the long run.

Save yourself from a large bill, legal problems and heartache by taking proper precautions.

A fall is likely to cause some damage to whomever is involved. Whether the damage is fatal or a minor injury, if it can be avoided the choice is obvious.

The following table further outlines expenses that can be incurred from a septic tank lid accident:

Expense	Amount USD
Lawsuit	\$1.1M (Parents of 3-year old involved in a fatal accident are currently in court with the homeowners.)
Medical Bills	\$5,406+ (Num. cited from a 2001 case)
Veterinary Bills	Walk in fee alone is \$70 - \$100 (According to city-data)
Fatality	\$5,000+ (Funeral Arrangements) Invaluable life

Installation Can Be Risky

Being able to do your own home repairs is not only satisfying but can also save you some money. However, if you're not careful you could end up in a disaster.

The most common injury sustained, even by professional technicians, is back injury due to heavy lifting. The easiest way to solve a lifting problem is to purchase a lighter lid, an obvious solution that is all too often overlooked. Plastic lids and risers not only prevent injuries sustained by lifting, but are much less likely to crack or erode.

Plastic is not indestructible; however, septic tank riser safety screens provide extra protection. Riser safety screens are not easily visible since they are inside the riser and under the cover. These screens can hold up to 250lbs per square foot! No septic tank project is truly safe without one.

Accidents Will Happen: Be Prepared

In a perfect world there will never be an incident involving a faulty septic tank lid. However, you can find yourself or a companion falling victim to an accident. It is essential to know what to do in case of an accident in order to protect yourself and those around you.



Do Remain calm. Hyperventilating will only increase chances of methane exposure.



Don't Be a *hero*. Climbing in to save a child, pet or loved one will do more harm than good. Both your lives will be put at risk.



Do Call 911. As soon as you are aware of the situation, call 911. It may seem silly but this call will make all the difference.



Don't Assume. Neglecting to inspect your lid is very unsafe. This puts you and others in proximity to the system in danger.



Do check your tank cover between servicing to make sure screws are securely fastened and there is no cover damage. Replace cover and screws if there is any damage



Buy a safety screen or some other kind of safety apparatus. Install an approved septic tank cover with safety screws.

About Polylok, Inc.

Polylok, Inc. is an international supplier of plastic injection molded products for the precast concrete, drainage, and onsite wastewater industries. Our home office is in Wallingford, Connecticut, and we have partnerships with several supply houses across the United States and Canada. Unlike most of our competitors, we design, manufacture, and ship our products from our Wallingford location. In addition, we hold over 75 patents and produce over 200 products for the precast, drainage, and onsite water industries.



888-765-9565 | 3 Fairfield Blvd, Wallingford, CT 06492