

SEWAGE (SEPTIC) SAFETY

IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY



Booklet created in partnership by:



UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATORY CHAIN

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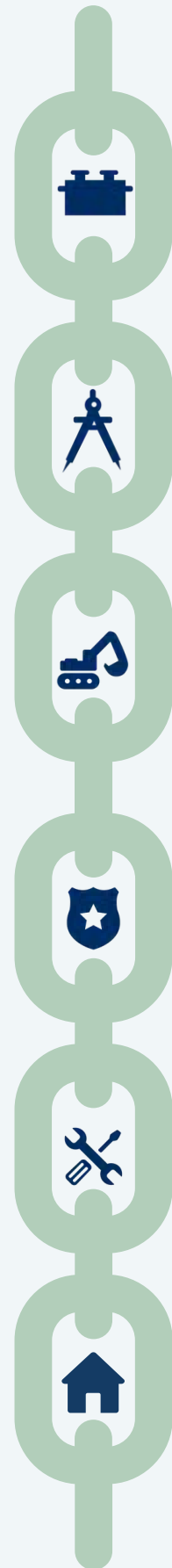
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Manufacturer

Designer

Installer

Inspector

**Pumper or
Service Provider**

Owner/Operator



Sewage systems, also known as septic systems, are a part of everyday infrastructure, but when safety is overlooked the consequences can be devastating.

Preventing tragedy requires a shared commitment across every stage of the system's lifecycle.

Safety is not the responsibility of one person or one profession, it depends on every link in the chain.

If even one link in this chain breaks, the safety of your family, your pets, and your community is put at risk.

This booklet is designed to help you understand each player's role, with a special focus on your critical responsibility as the ongoing guardian of your system.

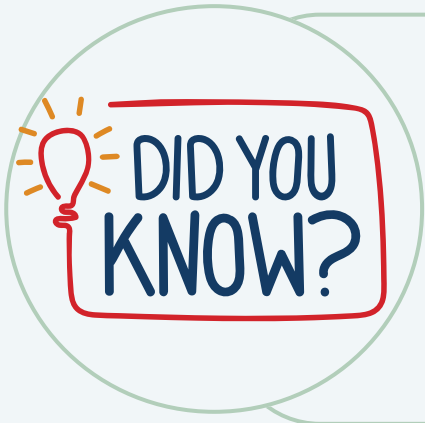


THE MANUFACTURER

THE FOUNDATION OF **SAFETY**

The journey of a safe septic system begins long before the septic tank ever reaches your yard. Manufacturers set the baseline structural integrity.

Standards & Quality: Manufacturers must produce septic tanks that meet rigorous engineering benchmarks consistent with Ontario Building Code requirements, which include CSA (Canadian Standards Association) standards, ensuring they are structurally sound and can withstand underground pressure.



Secure Access Openings: A safe tank must have properly designed access openings. This includes:

- Secure, heavy-duty, and well-fitting lids.
- Reliable, tamper-resistant fastening systems.
- Secondary safety devices (such as safety grates or safety nets beneath the main lid) designed to prevent accidental falls into the tank if the primary lid is compromised, damaged, or left open.

The Risk: If these elements are missing or defective from the factory, the entire sewage system chain is fundamentally weakened.

SCAN FOR OUR MANUFACTURER **SAFETY** CHECKLIST 

THE DESIGNER

DESIGNING **SAFETY** INTO THE SYSTEM

A safe septic system depends on well-planned design before any construction begins. Designers plan safeguards to protect people and property.

Safe Site Evaluation: Designers carefully assess the property before a system is approved. This includes evaluating the site and soil conditions, how the site will be used, and potential safety risks.



Safety focused design: Designers must plan tank locations and access openings to reduce unauthorized access risks, particularly by children, support safe at-grade maintenance, and meet or exceed Ontario Building Code clearance requirements.

Selecting Safe Components: Designers must specify systems that meet current standards. Septic tanks must comply with CSA B66 requirements, include effluent filters that meet OBC requirements, and be properly sized for the expected daily flow. Anchoring systems must be included where buoyancy calculations indicate they are required.



The Risk: A poor design can introduce hazards before the system is ever installed. Safe septic systems begin with thoughtful planning that anticipates risks and incorporates safeguards from the start.

SCAN FOR OUR DESIGNER **SAFETY** CHECKLIST 

THE INSTALLER

SETTING THE CONDITIONS FOR **SAFETY**

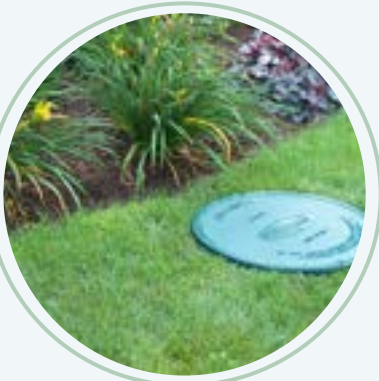
A well-designed and properly manufactured septic system can still become a serious hazard if it is not installed correctly. Installers play a critical role in turning plans into a safe, functioning system while protecting both workers and future property users.

Preparation and Site Safety: Before installation begins, installers must obtain all required permits, complete utility locates and ensure safe excavation practices are followed. This includes meeting trench safety requirements, properly sloping or shoring excavations, and following worker safety procedures for access, egress, water control, and confined spaces.



PROPER INSTALLATION

Installers must ensure the tank is placed on a level, stable, and well-drained base and that backfill material is placed evenly around the tank. Tanks, risers, and access openings must be secure and watertight, and all inlet and outlet components, including effluent filters, must be installed according to the manufacturer specifications, approved design, and Ontario Building Code requirements. Access openings must be located near grade or fitted with risers to allow safe servicing and maintenance.



Secure Assembly: Installers must ensure:

- All access openings are equipped with approved lids
- They are securely fastened using the provided hardware, or suitable corrosion-resistant hardware.
- Openings larger than 200 mm include a tamper-resistant secondary safety device capable of preventing falls.
- Improvised covers, such as patio stones, plywood, or other non-rated materials, must never be used.



FINAL SAFETY CHECK

Before leaving the site, installers must verify that all lids, fasteners, and secondary safety devices are secure and intact, and that the tank is either protected from vehicle traffic or designed to withstand vehicle loading where required.



The Risk: Installation errors can create immediate and long-term safety hazards. A missing safety device, unsecured lid, or improperly installed tank can place people at risk from the moment the installer leaves the property.

SCAN FOR OUR INSTALLER **SAFETY** CHECKLIST



THE INSPECTOR

VERIFYING **SAFETY** BEFORE APPROVAL

Inspection is the final checkpoint before a septic system is put into service. Inspectors provide an independent review to confirm that the system has been properly designed, correctly installed, and equipped with the safety features needed to protect the public.

CONFIRMING CODE COMPLIANCE

Before a system can be approved, inspectors carefully review the installation to ensure it was built according to the approved design and permit. They confirm that the tank size, configuration, and materials meet OBC requirements and verify that all required clearance distances have been maintained to support the system's safe operation.

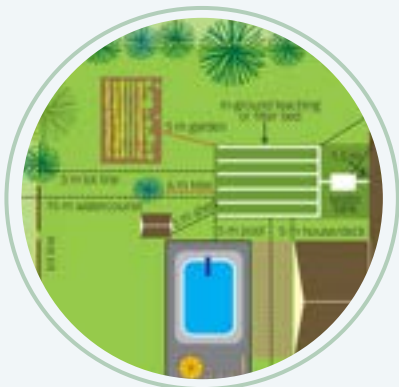
VERIFYING THE INSTALLATION

As part of the inspection, inspectors review safety components to ensure the tank is properly installed, secure, watertight, and structurally sound, with no signs of cracks or deformities. They verify that inlet and outlet devices are installed as intended, that access openings can be safely reached for future inspection and maintenance, and that appropriate protection is in place where vehicle loading may pose a risk.

- Checking Safety Devices:** Inspectors confirm that:
- Lids, screws, and fasteners are present and secure.
 - Secondary safety devices, such as safety grates or safety nets, are properly installed.
 - Protective features are tamper-resistance and functioning as intended.

The Risk: If deficiencies are missed during inspection, hazards can remain hidden until an incident occurs. Thorough inspection provides a critical safeguard that helps ensure every other link in the safety chain has done its job.

SCAN FOR OUR INSPECTOR **SAFETY** CHECKLIST



THE PUMPER OR SERVICE PROVIDER

MAINTAINING THE **SAFETY** CHAIN

Your septic system requires regular maintenance, pumping, and inspection. Every professional service visit must serve as a rigorous safety checkpoint.

RESTORING SECURITY

After pumping or inspecting the tank, service providers must properly re-secure all lids, bolts, and secondary safety devices.



- Inspecting for Wear & Tear:** During a service call, technicians are trained to look for:
- Stripped screw holes or broken fasteners.
 - Cracked, warped, or UV-damaged lids.
 - Compromised secondary safety devices.



WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

If a technician identifies a damaged component or a fastening issue that cannot be fixed immediately, they are obligated to **clearly communicate this hazard in writing** to you, the property owner.

The Risk: Failure to properly secure the system after servicing leaves behind an invisible hazard on your property.

SCAN FOR PUMPER/SERVICE PROVIDER **SAFETY** CHECKLIST



THE OWNER/OPERATOR

THE ONGOING GUARDIAN

While manufacturers, designers, installers, inspectors, and pumpers do their part, you are the daily eyes and ears on the ground. Septic safety does not end after installation or a service visit.

As the homeowner and operator of your septic system, you play a critical role in monitoring its condition and recognizing safety hazards. By remaining attentive and addressing problems promptly, you help ensure your property remains safe for family, guests, and pets, serving as the final guardian of the septic safety chain.

HOMEOWNER DO'S

- Know the location of your tank and leaching bed
- Keep all access lids securely fastened at all times
- Ensure safety screens are installed beneath every access point
- Inspect lids regularly for cracks, stripped screws, or damage
- Use hex-head stainless steel screws
- Keep children and pets away during inspections or pump-outs

HOMEOWNER DONT'S

- ✗ Never enter a tank — gases and lack of oxygen can be fatal
- ✗ Never leave an open lid unattended
- ✗ Never rely on “clean-out pipes” as lids. They are not safe access points
- ✗ Never drive or park over the tank or septic field
- ✗ Never ignore signs of corrosion, cracks, or loose lids
- ✗ Never use flammable tools or smoke near the tank (methane hazard)

SCAN FOR OUR OWNER/OPERATOR **SAFETY** CHECKLIST



PREVENT

A SEPTIC **TRAGEDY**

RULES OF SEPTIC SAFETY

- NEVER leave an open septic tank unattended for any period of time during servicing.
- NEVER allow children or pets to play on, around, or near septic tank lids or risers.
- NEVER drive vehicles or heavy equipment over your septic tank or leaching bed (unless the system was explicitly engineered and rated for vehicular traffic).
- ACT IMMEDIATELY if you find a loose lid, a missing screw, or a cracked access opening. Block off the area completely to prevent access and call a licensed professional immediately.

ONE SYSTEM, ONE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Septic safety depends on every person doing their part, every time. A failure at any stage; manufacturing, installation, servicing, or ownership, can compromise the entire system.

When each role is carried out properly, septic systems remain safe and reliable. When one step is missed, the consequences can be severe.

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS MOST

At its core, septic safety is about protecting people, especially children and pets who may not recognize the danger.

By working together and maintaining vigilance at every stage, we can prevent avoidable incidents and ensure septic systems remain safe in every community.



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF SEWAGE INDUSTRY SERVICES

The Ontario Association of Sewage Industry Services (OASIS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for the liquid waste and septage handling industry and portable sanitation sector in Ontario. OASIS is committed to fostering responsible practices in the design, installation, and maintenance of onsite wastewater treatment systems and the operation and upkeep of portable toilets. The organization's mission extends to educating homeowners, contractors, regulators, and policymakers about the vital role that onsite wastewater treatment and portable sanitation play in safeguarding public health and the environment.

CONCRETE PRECASTERS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Established in 1991, the Concrete Precasters Association of Ontario has worked to create and strengthen relationships between our members, in an effort to better our industry and provide a unified voice for the independent manufacturers of septic tanks and other concrete products.

ONTARIO ONSITE WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION

The Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association (OOWA) is a provincial not-for-profit association dedicated to promoting the benefit and value of onsite and decentralized wastewater management through education, improved standards of practice, and advocacy for sound policies. We support our network of knowledgeable professionals recognized as the foremost source of sustainable onsite and decentralized wastewater management expertise.