

The benefits of septic tank risers

Save money and your back by installing septic tank access risers.

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Finding and digging up the lid to your septic tank can be a pain. Many homeowners don't even know where to start looking for the lid to their septic tank. Some are just not physically able to dig it out. Septic services will do the digging for you but it can get expensive. How do people find the buried treasure that is their septic system lid? Some consult a map which is retained with permit records at the county or regional Environmental Health Department.

Others search for a sign such as a dead patch of grass or other visual cues. Still others try to follow the pipe from the house out with a probe, marking it as they go along. Whatever method you use, digging it out is still required and if the right place has not been found, another hole must be dug.

If you have risers installed it is as easy as walking out and pointing to the access lid. Some counties require septic tank access risers be installed; Kalamazoo, Oakland and Otsego to name a few. Other counties may require them on new installations. Check with your Michigan County for current onsite waste water codes that affect you. The author of Flo-Hawks Blog describes the difficulty of not having a riser as "welding the hood of your car shut." While not all riser accesses are the same, it cannot be denied that digging up your yard to gain access to your septic tank is time consuming hard work for either the home owner or a paid professional; and sometimes for both.

A septic tank riser is a pipe made of either plastic, fiberglass, or concrete. It creates a vertical portal at the ground surface for easy access to the septic tank for inspection and pumping out. The lid is then either left exposed or with a very thin layer of soil and grass over it. Some risers come as a kit



Risers make accessing the septic tank an easy task. | Photo by MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

and can be installed by a professional or an adept do-it-yourselfer. Any changes to your septic tank or system will of course need to be inspected by your county environmental health department or other certified inspector.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality recommends that your septic tank and onsite wastewater system be inspected, and pumped if necessary, every 3-5 years depending upon use. The addition of a riser to your system can be planned to coincide with your regular septic maintenance schedule. The one-time cost of installing risers will pay for itself with the savings from the elimination of future repetitive uncovering for inspection and pumping. Having a riser in place can also significantly reduce the cost of septic tank maintenance over time through the ease of access and time on the job saved. Plus you will be spared digging up your lawn every time as well.

For more information about the onsite waste water systems, contact Beth Clawson, MSU Extension Educator. To learn more septic systems, contact Michigan State University Extension Natural Resources educators who are working across Michigan to provide aquatic invasive species educational programming and assistance. You can contact an educator through MSU Extension's "Find an Expert" search tool using the keywords "Natural Resources Water Quality."

Resources:

- https://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,4561,7-135-3313_71618_51002---,00.html
 - <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - https://www.canr.msu.edu/septic_system_education/resources_for_homeowners
 - <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/aex-740>
 - www.flowhawks.com/blog/septic-tank-risers-pros-and-cons
 - <http://homeguides.sfgate.com/lid-septic-system-50445.html>
 - <http://advancedsepticsservicesfl.com/septic-tank-risers-covers>
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