

**Benton-Franklin
Health District**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Kennewick
7102 West Okanogan Place

Pasco
412 West Clark Street

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**Benton-Franklin Health
District Website**
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**Washington Department
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www.doh.wa.gov

**Centers for Disease
Control**
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FRANKLIN COUNTY TODDLER SURVIVES FALL IN SEPTIC TANK

Homeowners Urged to Secure Lids to On-site Sewage Systems

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KENNEWICK — A Franklin County toddler could have died last week because of a few missing screws. On April 1, Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) received a report that a 3-year-old child had fallen into a septic tank at a newly-constructed residence in Franklin County. Although the child was not seriously injured, similar falls have proven fatal to children in Washington State, including a 2-year-old boy who died last year in Skagit County.

The septic system at the property had been recently inspected for, and construction approved by, the Health District, according to Environmental Health Supervisor Rick Dawson. “It’s up to the construction company to ensure that lids are secured once construction is complete and it appears that didn’t happen in this case.” All building plans, permits, and inspections require lids to be secured, but inspections often happen early in the construction of a home and are not repeated after the home is occupied, which can be many months later.

Access to the tank was through a lightweight lid at ground level, as is common in new construction. Prior to 2007, septic tank access was buried, with heavy lids that prevented accidental removal. In this case, authorities believe that the lid was not secured with screws upon completion of the construction. This oversight allowed the child to remove the lid and fall in. Although the child was covered in sewage, the fact that the home was newly occupied and the septic tank nearly empty is what saved him.

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Residents with septic systems are urged to check their septic tank access points and ensure that lids are properly secured with screws. Builders and companies who install, repair, and pump septic systems have been reminded of the dangers of leaving a lid unsecured.

Anyone with questions about their septic system should contact the Health District at 509-460-4200.

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