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Consumer Protection Safety Commission's Guidelines affecting Public Pools & Spas
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Public Pools not complying by December 2008 will risk fines or be shut down

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With the December 18, 2008 deadline for public pool owners to comply with the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) guideline for public pool safety quickly approaching, pool owners must take action to add a third layer of protection to their pools and spas before it is too late. Pools that do not meet the specified guidelines presented by the (CPSC) in June 2008, risk the possibility of being shut down and owners risk being fined over \$1 million.

A frightening and often underreported occurrence, suction entrapment can result when a swimmer is "sucked" onto a pool or spa's powerful water circulation system much like the way the hose of a vacuum cleaner will stick to a person's palm. The force of this suction can be tremendous – up to 500 pounds of pressure or more for a main drain with a standard pump! Despite this risk, pools can still be enjoyed safely when the proper safety precautions are in place – a stride that the Consumer Product Safety Commission will help to enforce nationwide.

Statistics show that drowning is the second leading cause of death among children ages one to 14. In addition to the basics such as safety fences, pool covers, alarms and drain covers, additional anti-entrapment devices must be added to all public pools and spas.

What do you need to know to be compliant with the Consumer Product Safety Guidelines (Sec. 1404)?

By December 2008, each public pool and spa in the U.S. must be equipped with anti-entrapment devices or systems that comply with the ASME/ANSI performance standard. Additionally, each pool or spa with a single main drain – other than an unblockable drain – must be equipped with at least one or more of the following layers of protection to prevent entrapment by pool or spa drains:

- Safety vacuum release system (SVRS)

An SVRS must cease operation of the pump, reverse the circulation flow or provide a vacuum release at a suction outlet when a blockage is detected. It also must have been tested by an independent third party and found to conform to ASME/ANSI standard 112.19.17 or ASTM standard F2387. An SVRS can be installed in under an hour for about \$500 - \$700. Representative brands include Vac-Alert Industries, Stingl, Hayward Pool Products, and A.O. Smith Company.

- Suction-limiting vent system

While not widely used, these systems introduce air into the suction line thus causing the pump to lose prime and relieve the suction forces at the main drain. The installation of this system will require significant demolition and reconstruction of the pool.

- Gravity drainage system

These have gained popularity in states such as Florida and are practical for new pool construction only. This device uses a collector tank with a separate water storage vessel from which the pump draws water. Water moves from the pool to the collector tank due to atmospheric pressure, limiting drain suction forces significantly.

- Automatic pump shut-off system

A device that senses a drain blockage and shuts off the pump system. Some SVRS devices may meet this definition. Currently there is no industry standard for automatic pump shut-off systems. However, the current SVRS standards provide release and response time of under three seconds.

- Drain disablement

A device or system that disables the drain of a pool or spa.

- Other systems

Any other system determined by the CPSC to be equally effective as, or better than, the systems described previously.

What option is right for your pool?

All of the options listed above are effective layers of protection against suction entrapment. However, the SVRS remains the most economical option to bring existing public pools and spas up to code. This is because the SVRS is easily installed into the existing suction line from the main drain at the pool pump or the electrical line at the pool pump – both typically in as little as 30 minutes.

What is the definition of a “public” pool or spa?

Under the new legislation, a public pool or spa means that it is either generally open to the public, whether for a fee or free of charge, or is open exclusively to:

- Members of an organization and their guests.
- Residents of a multi-unit apartment building, apartment complex, residential real estate development or other multi-family residential area (other than a municipality, township or other local government jurisdiction).
- Patrons of a hotel or other public accommodations facility.
- Operated by the Federal Government (or by a concessionaire on behalf of the Federal Government) for the benefit of members of the Armed Forces and their dependents or employees of any department or agency and their dependents.

Paul Pennington is a founding member of The Pool Safety Consortium, a nonprofit organization based in Washington DC. Having began as an informative database for industry leaders and tradesmen providing current standards of international and state codes, it has since evolved into much more. Currently, the Consortium works to educate the consumer on current legislation as well as available safety devices to help protect children and the lives of others from swimming pool and spa tragedies. For more information on the Pool Safety Consortium please visit (<http://www.poolsafetyconsortium.org>).