
Federal Safety Requirements for Public Pools and Spas

The *Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act* (“VGB Act”) established mandatory federal safety requirements for public pools and spas. The law is aimed at reducing deaths and injuries from suction entrapment. This handout summarizes requirements of the law for public pool and spa operators.

General Requirements

- All public pools and spas must be equipped with anti-entrapment covers on every drain (i.e., suction outlet). Covers must comply with ASME/ANSI A.112.19.8-2007, *Suction Fittings for Swimming and Wading Pools*, published by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME).
- Pools and spas that have single main drains must install additional safety systems. Pools and spas with “unblockable” drains are exempt from this requirement.

Seasonal pools, which are currently closed, do not have to meet the requirements until they are reopened.

Drain Covers

The ASME standard recognizes two categories of drain covers: manufactured products and field-fabricated outlets. Manufactured products may be purchased from a pool supplier; field-fabricated outlets are built on site and must be certified by a registered design professional.

Manufactured products may be identified by one of the following markings: “VGB 2008,” “ASME 112.18.8-2007,” or an ASME 112.18.8-2007 swimmer logo. Field-fabricated outlets are unmarked and are identified by a written report that is prepared by the certifier.

Covers must be sized properly to prevent hair entrapment. Each cover should have a flow rating equal or greater than the maximum system flow. When multiple drains are plumbed in series, the flow rate should be determined with one of the drains blocked.

Covers should be installed according to manufacturer’s requirements. Mounting frames, hardware, and fastening systems may require replacement to properly secure the cover. Field-built sumps may require redesign.

Additional Safety Systems

Pools and spas that have a single main drain, other than an unblockable drain, must employ at least one of the following additional safety devices or systems: drain disablement, automatic pump shutoffs, Safety Vacuum Release Systems (SVRS), gravity drainage systems, or suction-limiting vents. Other methods are permitted as long as they are determined by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to be at least as effective as, or better than, one of the five systems identified in the law. For new construction, CPSC suggests building pools without any drains and using gutters, overflows, and skimmers to provide water to the pump.

Systems should be designed and installed by qualified individuals. Not all safety systems may be appropriate for all pool and spa configurations (e.g., SVRS may not be suitable for piping systems with check valves or hydrostatic valves).

Guidance Materials

CPSC information on the VGB Act is available at <http://www.poolsafely.gov/pool-spa-safety-act/virginia-graeme-baker/>. This material includes the text of the law, CPSC staff interpretations, and compliance assistance information.

Detailed technical information on avoiding suction entrapment is contained in ANSI/APSP 7, *American National Standard for Suction Entrapment Avoidance*, published by the American Pool and Spa Professionals (APSP). Information on this standard is available at <http://www.apsp.org/>.