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Safety Standards **for Canadian Swimming Pools and Waterfronts** **Swimming Pool Standard**

Residential Pool Safety Standard

Standard

Every owner of a residential swimming pool must ensure that:

- its access is controlled
- rescue equipment is readily available
- pool is properly supervised when in use
- safety rules are followed by all users
- pool water chemistry is kept within safe operating standards

Definitions

Residential Pool: A swimming pool typically found in the backyard of a private residence for the use of the residents of the home and their guests.

Rationale

Statistic shows that the majority of drownings that occur in pools, occur in private pools (87%). It is the owner's responsibility to make their backyard pool safe by controlling its access to authorized people only, to provide the minimum rescue equipment needed during a rescue by by-standers, to provide supervision - particularly of young children, and set rules to be followed to increase bather safety.

Implementation

In addition to complying with provincial regulations and municipal bylaws, owners should adhere to the following recommendations to enhance safety in a residential swimming pool.

Control Access - Fence

- Build a fence that completely surrounds the perimeter of the pool. The minimum height of the fence must be 1.2 metres; however, most jurisdictions require a higher fence.
- If you use a wall of a house or building as part of your perimeter, this wall should not have an opening such as a door or window.

- If this wall has an opening such as a door or window, consider adding a fence between the house and the pool.
- If there is a door or window, they should be equipped with a locking device located at a maximum height so as not to be reachable by young children.
- Do not use a hedge as a substitute for a fence.
- If there is a gate to the pool in your fence, it should:
 - be the same height as the fence.
 - leave no gap to pass through.
 - be equipped with a self-closing device.
 - be equipped with a self-locking device.
 - be lockable.
 - have the locking device located at a maximum height so as not to be reachable by young children.
 - have the locking device located on the inner side of the fence so as not to be easily accessible from outside the fence.
- Alarms on the fence gate or motion detectors in the pool water can be used as warnings if someone enters without permission.
- The fence must:
 - not be climbable.
 - have framing braces on the inside of the perimeter.
 - have vertical slates rather than horizontal ones.
 - have no objects near the fence that could be used to climb over it.
 - not be electrified nor barbed.
- Note: A self-closing gate is a type of gate that closes automatically without manual intervention. When this gate closes, a self-locking gate latch will lock itself without anyone needing to touch it.

Control Access – Pool Cover

- If a safety cover is used to control access, or during pool closure, it must be designed by the manufacturer to support the weight of a person, object or pets. Any pool covers that cannot support such weight must be avoided as they can cause entrapment.
- The pool cover must be secured in place whenever the pool is not in use or when there is no adult supervision present.

Control Access – Ladder

In the case of an above ground pool, the ladder giving access to the pool should be removed and stored so no unauthorized person can use it to gain access to the pool or the ladder should be rendered unusable with a lock as long as:

- the height of the pool wall meets the fence height requirement in the jurisdiction.
- the outside walls of the pool are not climbable.

Even with all these perimeter restrictions in place, there should always be enough deck space to walk around the pool, be able to exit from all sides and to perform a rescue.

Safety Equipment

The following safety equipment should be readily available and in good working order:

- reaching pole, ring buoy and/or throw rope
- first aid kit
- signaling device (such as a whistle)
- emergency phone
- lifejackets for weak or non-swimmers
- buoy line to mark the drop-off to deep water

Rules

The following rules should be followed by all bathers:

- No glass containers in or near the pool.
- Do not use alcohol and drugs in or around the pool.
- Always walk when near the pool.
- No horseplay in and around the pool.
- Keep the deck clear of clutter.
 - Store covers and maintenance material when the pool is in use.
- Enter water feet first.
- Never swim alone.
- Young children must be supervised at all times.
- Remove toys and objects from water when not in use.
- No electrical devices near the pool.
- If there is thunder or lightning, stay out of the pool.

Diving Hazard

Most backyard pools are not deep enough to safely dive in headfirst whether it be from a diving board or from the deck itself. This activity is high risk and can cause severe spinal-cord injury. Sufficient depth and space on either side must be considered. Refer to our *Minimum Diving Depth from Pool Deck* Safety Standard or consult your municipal, provincial or territorial regulations on the specific requirements in your area.

Supervision

Non-swimmers should be directly supervised within arm's reach at all times. When the pool is in use, have a designated responsible adult whose sole job is to supervise the bathers and activities. Ideally, this person holds a Bronze Cross or National Lifeguard certification.

Pool Chemicals and Maintenance

- Pool chemicals should be stored away from the pool area and locked away.
- Personal safety equipment should be worn when manipulating chemicals.
- Follow manufacturer's recommendations for storage and handling chemicals.
- Regular inspections should be performed to ensure all safety features are in place such as drain covers, skimmers and grates.
- Regular water tests should be performed to ensure water is chemically within safe operating standards.

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Approval

- Approved by the Lifesaving Society Canada Board of Directors on July 6, 2026.

Disclaimer

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards are developed using Coroners' recommendations, the latest evidence-based research, and reflect the aquatics industry's best practices at the time the publication was approved.

The purpose of these standards is to encourage swimming pool, waterpark and waterfront owners, managers, operators and regulators to adopt these standards, in order to prevent drownings in aquatic environments.

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards do not replace or supersede local, provincial/territorial or federal legislation or regulations, but they are considered the standard to which aquatic facility operators should work towards, in order to enhance safety within their operations and to prevent drowning.