

# FEDERAL POOL & SPA SAFETY ACT

## Managing Hospitality Risk



### WHAT'S AT RISK?

There is an annual average of 283 drowning deaths and 2,700 emergency room-treated submersion injuries involving children younger than five in pools and spas. In addition, from 1997-2007, there were 74 reported incidents of suction entrapment, including 9 deaths and 63 injuries. A new federal law is aimed at reducing these deaths and injuries by making pools safer, securing the environment around the pool, and educating consumers and industry on pool safety.

In December 2007, federal law changed with the passage of the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act which takes effect December 2008. The Act specifically targets dangers associated with pool and spa intake drains and requires that all public pools and spas mitigate intake entrapment concerns by December 2008. The law includes public pools with hotel pools specifically named in the provision.

### WHAT ARE YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS?

Assess the equipment of any existing pool(s) you operate, and the specifications of any pool you plan to build in the future.

The following is a list of Anti-Entrapment Devices acceptable under the Act, all of which must comply with ASME/ANSI performance standards:

- Safety Vacuum Release System - A system which ceases operation of the pump, reverses the circulation flow, or otherwise provides a vacuum release at a suction outlet when a blockage is detected.

- Suction-Limiting Vent System - A system with a tamper-resistant atmospheric opening.
- Gravity Drainage System - A system that utilizes a collector tank.
- Automatic Pump Shut-off System - A system with an automatic shut off system.
- Drain Disablement - A device or system that disables the drain.
- Other Systems - Any other system determined by the Commission to be equally effective as, or better than, the systems described above at preventing or eliminating the risk of injury or death associated with pool drainage systems.

### HOW CAN YOU BETTER PROTECT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

For some suggestions designed to assist you in developing sound policies and procedures for your organization, please turn this document over and review the attached checklist.

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For more information about this and other hospitality risk management topics, please contact:

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# Checklist: Complying with the New Pool & Spa Safety Act

- Consult an expert on pool construction and maintenance. Together, determine if your pool has a single main drain, or multiple.
- Multiple main drains consist of, at minimum, two fully submerged suction outlets per pump, with drain cover centers at least three feet apart. If your pool has multiple main drains, it is not subject to Section 1404 c (1) (A)(ii) of the Act.
- If you have a single main drain, determine if it is unblockable or not. Unblockable drains may include drain configurations that prevent a seal from occurring (large aspect cover: 18" x 23" minimum); long channels that cannot be blocked by the body; large outlet grates (diagonal measure of 29" or more); circulation design that do not include full submerged suction outlets.
- If you have a single main drain, and it is not an unblockable drain, you must have one or more of the following devices or systems in place to prevent entrapment:
  - Safety Vacuum Release System (SVRS) – A safety vacuum release system which ceases operation of the pump, reverses the circulation flow, or otherwise provides a vacuum release at a suction outlet when a blockage is detected, that has been tested by an independent third party and found to conform to ASME/ANSI standard A112.19.17 or ASTM standard F2387.
  - Suction Limiting Vent System (SLVS) – A pipe tied to the suction side of the circulation system on one end and open to the atmosphere on the opposite end, also called an atmospheric vent. The pipe is normally full of water equal to the same height as the pool. When a blockage occurs at the main drain, air is introduced into the suction line, causing the pump to lose prime and relieving the suction forces at the main drain.
  - Gravity Drainage System – A gravity drainage system uses a collector tank from which the pool circulation pump draws water. Water moves from the pool to the collector tank due to atmospheric pressure, gravity and the displacement of water by bathers which removes the need for direct suction at the pool. This type of system is also referred to as a reservoir, surge tank, or surge pit.
  - Automatic Pump Shut Off System – A device that could sense a drain blockage and shut off the pump system. There are different types, depending on the manufacturer.
  - Drain disablement – A device or system that disables the drain.
  - The Act does allow other Anti-Entrapment Devices to be used so long as the Consumer Product Safety Commission has determined that the proposed Anti-Entrapment Device is as effective, or better than, the five Anti-Entrapment Devices listed above, at preventing or eliminating the risk of injury or death associated with pool drainage systems. 15 U.S.C. §8003(c)(1)(A)(ii)(VI).
- Make sure all the pool drain covers have ASME/ANSI A112.19.8 compliant drain covers on or before December 19th, 2008. The basic requirements are that the cover material is tested for structural integrity, body entrapment and hair entrapment/entanglement, and the cover must display a flow value in gallons per minute (gpm) that indicates the maximum flow rate for which the cover has been approved.