



Press Release - August 7, 2009

Backyard Pool Safety: an Insider's Perspective

This year many jurisdictions across Canada have been reviewing their existing by-laws and regulations with respect to backyard pool safety. In Québec, a new Residential Swimming Pool Safety Act is being proposed, and the primary focus of this new legislation will be a requirement that all new pool installations include a four-sided fence around the perimeter.

While some NGO's have been espousing the four-sided fence as a 'cure-all' in terms of preventing toddler drownings, representatives of the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada see the issue of pool safety from a different perspective. Over the years, pool builders in Canada have gained considerable expertise in this domain, and are incorporating new technologies in the installation of backyard pools.

David Huxtable, President of the PHTCC, recently stated, "A layered approach to safety is the best way to prevent drownings of young children. Four-sided fencing is one option that will undoubtedly bring about a safer pool environment, but it is not necessarily the only or best solution. A four-sided fence cannot be counted on in isolation, as drowning records have revealed. Sadly, there have been several drowning incidents in recent years when fence gates have been propped open by adults, or by older children."

The Executive Director of the Council, Robert Wood, emphasized that pool safety is not simply one-dimensional. "We should be embracing the new technologies that are now available and can be deployed to greatly increase the level of security around the family pool. Safety covers are virtually impenetrable. Wave sensors and access alarms are outstanding options as well. Certainly a four-sided barrier (i.e., a three-sided fence with the house forming the fourth side) used in combination with self-closing and lockable doors, immersion and/or access alarms, a safety cover and/or sensors would offer a much higher level of security than merely a four-sided fence. We anticipate that the regulatory authorities will see the big picture, and will look beyond a quick-fix solution".

D. Huxtable concluded, "Even with all of these safeguards in place, adult supervision is a must. No matter what mechanical and electronic devices are installed, there is absolutely no substitute for adult supervision when it comes to the security of young children."

The industry's recommended guidelines under the title "General Safety Provisions for Pools and Hot Tubs" (G-0209) are available from the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada. (www.poolcouncil.ca)