

Recommended Guidelines
General Safety Provisions
for Pools and Hot Tubs [G-0209]
Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada
April 2009

These guidelines are provided by the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada as reference documents for use by pool and spa builders, contractors and local regulatory authorities in communities across the country. They are based on practical experiences in the field, fundamental research into cause and effect, and an extensive review of existing by-laws and legislation that specifically address this subject matter.

The Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada is a voluntary, not-for-profit association representing the interests of the pool and hot tub industry. As such it is not considered a harmonized organization, and therefore does not qualify as an accredited national standards-writing body.

Notwithstanding the above, the thrust of these guidelines is the basic principle of making pools safer through the adoption of state-of-the-art construction and operating practices. Key elements of these recommended procedures were derived from guidance received through relationships with sister organizations that address water safety concerns. These guidelines are endorsed in principle by the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada, and we strongly recommend their widespread implementation.

Introduction

The Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada recognizes the importance of making backyard swimming pools and hot tubs as safe as possible. Years of experience in designing, building, installing and servicing swimming pools and hot tubs has taught us that the prevention of accidents is best accomplished through several layers of protection.

Recommendations

The following series of guidelines is intended for homeowners and regulators as well as pool and hot tub installers. The layers of safety described in Categories 1 through 4 below have been endorsed by the Council and should be recognized as compulsory measures. In addition, the Council strongly advocates the deployment of at least one of the supplementary options provided under category 5.

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1) **Specifications**

All hot tubs and swimming pools must be installed in compliance with municipal by-laws.

2) **Safety Awareness**

Pool and spa users need to become familiar with fundamental safety rules. (Appendix A.)

3) **Adult Supervision**

At all times when children may be present, adult supervision is mandatory. There is absolutely no substitute for direct and constant supervision of children near bodies of water.

4) **Structural Protection**

Four-sided Barrier – The backyard must be fenced, walled or densely hedged on three sides in compliance with local by-laws (or to a height of 1.8 metres where no by-law exists), with the house forming a barrier on the fourth side. A four-sided enclosure shall be used in combination with self-closing, self-latching gates, lockable doors, and self-closures for garage doors that directly access the yard.

5) **Supplementary Safety Measures**

In addition to the above requirements, the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada recommends the use of supplementary layers of safety that help to prevent unwanted access. Any one or combination of the following options will provide an extra element of safety:

- A) ***Safety Covers*** – There are manual and automatic safety covers available that when installed will separate the water from the intruder. These covers are designed to take the weight of many adults and will easily keep a child out of the water. Some safety covers may be locked.

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- B) **Access Alarms** – Gates or doors to the swimming pool and hot tub area may be outfitted with alarms. These alarms sound if the gate or door is opened, or is left ajar.
- C) **Wave Alarms and Sensors** – Wave alarms and motion detectors may be installed. An alarm is triggered if there is any motion in the water or around the perimeter of the pool or hot tub.
- D) **Four-sided Fence** – A four-sided fence may be constructed to completely surround the pool or hot tub. It must be built in compliance with local by-laws (or to a height of 1.8 metres where no by-law exists), fabricated of non-climbable material, isolated completely from any other barrier, and equipped with self-closing and self-latching gates.
- E) **“Kiddie-fencing”** – In order to separate a play area in the backyard from the swimming pool and hot tub, a kiddie-fence may be installed. This fencing will not allow toddlers access to the restricted area.
- F) **Restricted openings** – Windows with access to the swimming pool and hot tub may be restricted to openings of less than ten centimeters. Note: These same windows must be installed with an override that allows an adult to open fully and exit through the window in case of an emergency

Additional Information

Pool and spa owners are strongly encouraged to access the wealth of resources available from organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross, the Royal Lifesaving Society of Canada, and the St. John Ambulance • Canada. Their offerings include literature and courses on water safety and lifesaving techniques.

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Appendix A

Backyard Pool and Spa Safety Rules

- Stay within sight and reach of children in, on or near water at all times.
Active adult supervision is the primary layer of safety.
- Always watch children closely when they are playing with inflatable toys or swimming in lifejackets as these do not replace active adult supervision for safety.
- Encourage swimming lessons and first aid instruction for all family members or guardians.
- Restrict access to your backyard pool or spa and ensure that the four-sided barrier conforms to local by-laws.
- Refrain from propping gates open, or disabling alarms on doors that connect to pools or spas.
- Keep all chemical products away from children and other unauthorized individuals.
- Encourage walking only around the poolside. Running is prohibited.
- Always swim with a “buddy” or with an adult supervisor.
- Do not swim or soak if you have been drinking alcohol.
- Drain all backyard wading pools after every use.
- Never dive into a spa, an above ground pool, or the shallow end of any pool. Always enter pools feet first.
- Do not use slides on above ground pools.
- Establish a set of pool rules and ensure that everyone using your pool follows them.
- In the event of an emergency, call 9-1-1.

