

Appendix H: The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act (VGB)

On December 19, 2007, the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act (VGB) was enacted by Congress and signed by President Bush. The act was driven by the recognition that accidental drowning is still a leading cause of death in children aged 1 to 14. In fact, the act was named after the granddaughter of former Secretary of State James Baker III, who tragically drowned in June 2002 when the suction from a spa drain entrapped her under water.

Research has shown that installation of proper access barriers and additional protective measures can substantially reduce the risk of accidental drowning. Therefore, VGB mandates steps to prevent the hidden hazards of drain entrapment and eviscerations in pools and spas. The law became effective on **December 19, 2008**.

Under the law, all public pools and spas must have ASME/ANSI A112.19.8-2007 compliant drain covers for all suction outlets. This standard establishes minimum protection ensuring that suction outlet drains:

- Are properly secured;
- Have been tested by a Nationally Recognized Testing Lab (NRTL) to protect against different types of entrapment, including hair, body, and entanglement issues and have certification from the NRTL as compliant with the new standard;
- Are strong enough to protect against effects of sunlight and physical forces that could break the drain cover;
- Are sized to provide protection of the drain cover; and
- Are installed and secured based on the limitations established by the drain manufacturer.

This law also includes equalizer lines that are used in conjunction with skimmer suction lines designed to protect the pump should water levels fall below skimmer overflow weirs.

For irregularly shaped suction outlets, there is a provision in the law that allows for site specific, field fabricated drain covers so long as the final product meets the ASME standard and the drain is certified by a Registered Design Professional.

VGB also requires a second anti-entrapment system to be installed, when there is only a single main drain. VGB does not require a secondary system if the single drain is unblockable. However, some states, including Washington, have concerns that when a single drain cover is broken or removed, the drain is still vulnerable and some additional entrapment prevention protection is required. In Washington State we ask that at least a manual shutoff switch and audible alarm be provided on any single main drain, including an unblockable drain.

Some examples of other secondary anti-entrapment systems include:

- A safety vacuum release system (SVRS), which shuts off power to the pump, reverses the circulation flow or otherwise provides a vacuum release at a suction outlet when a blockage is detected;
- A suction limiting vent system, with a tamper-resistant atmospheric opening;
- A gravity drainage system that utilizes a collector tank;
- Drain disablement; or
- Other system determined by the CPSC to be equally effective in preventing suction entrapment.

Proper installation of VGB drain covers and other safety equipment is essential to assure that they continue to work properly. Pool operators are encouraged to have the new main drain covers and other necessary supporting components (fasteners, installation frames or brackets, etc.) installed by a pool professional who understands the law. The installer must be familiar with the federal regulations, staff interpretation memoranda, national standards, various product installation requirements, state guidelines and any local health jurisdiction permit requirements. After successfully installing emergency equipment, pool operators must retain supporting documentation including:

- The name of installer;
- Product literature (drain covers will have an expiration date);
- Determination of maximum flow;
- Assurance that drain cover is properly secured;
- Pool drain sump dimensions; and
- Assurance that when multiple drains are in the pool that no single drain can become the sole source of suction.

For more VGB related information visit:

The WA State Department of Health Website at:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov>

Consumer Product Safety Commission Website at:

<http://www.cpsc.gov>

Association of Pool Spa Professionals Website at:

<http://www.apsp.org>