

Residential Swimming Pool Safety Requirements

This handout includes important safety information for residential swimming pools in the areas of enclosure and siting requirements, maintenance suggestions, and related Permits.

A backyard swimming pool can be an enjoyable addition to the backyard. However, both above-ground and in-ground residential swimming pools bring with them a need to be aware of the hazards present with any open body of water of sufficient size. Primarily, these hazards are drowning and illness due to lack of proper maintenance. Recently, above-ground backyard swimming pools are becoming more affordable and easier to install, with newly-introduced large inflated soft sided pools ranging in size up to 5.5 meters (18 feet) in diameter. It is important to remember the health and safety concerns associated with pools of all sizes.

ENCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

To help prevent drowning accidents, any pool having a surface area exceeding 14.0 m² (150 square feet) and a depth of more than 450mm (18 inches) needs to be enclosed by a fence. For example, circular pools with diameters of over 4.4 meters (14 feet) exceed this surface area.

A requirement of the City's [Construction Bylaw](#), this fence must be:

- at least 1070 mm (3 feet 6 inches) high, having no opening greater than 100mm (4 inches),
- built so that no feature of the fence provides footholds or openings which make it easy for a child to climb over the fence,
- equipped with a self-closing gate that has a spring lock on the inside (pool side) of the fence, and
- a complete enclosure of the pool, such that the house is not considered to be part of the fence.

These requirements are intended for child safety; however, it is important to remember that children of all ages are drawn to pools. Children should always be supervised when they are in the pool area. A reach pole or life ring should be available in the pool area when you cannot lean over the pool side to reach a child in the center of the pool.

SITING GUIDELINES

The pool should be located so that water damage will not occur if the pool accidentally collapses. Also, under the City's [Zoning Bylaw](#), for pools exceeding 0.91 meters (3.0 feet) high, sufficient vision clearance from driveways is required; pools exceeding 1.22 meters (4.0 feet) height must be placed to the rear of the front face of the house (i.e.- in the backyard). Also the noise generated by the operation of the pool filter should be considered when placing the pool.

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MAINTENANCE SUGGESTIONS

The filter pump should be directly plugged into an outdoor ground fault interrupted (GFI) receptacle; the long-term connection of extension cords may be a fire hazard and should not be used to provide power to the filter pump.

Unlike “kiddie” pools which are filled, emptied and cleaned after each use, larger pools are intended for ongoing use during the summer. Therefore, there is the possibility for the water to become contaminated with bacteria which can cause stomach and skin diseases. These large pools must be properly maintained. Filter pumps should be in constant operation when the pool is full, with filters being changed according to the manufacturer’s recommendations.

A basic pool testing kit is necessary to test the water to help maintain chemical sanitizer levels in the pool water, as well as keeping the acidity/alkalinity (pH) at a proper level. If the pool is found to have insufficient sanitizer upon testing, or if the pool water becomes “cloudy” to the point that you cannot clearly see the bottom of the pool, you should stop using the pool until the problem is fixed. If cloudiness isn’t fixed with the addition of pool chemicals, the water should be changed.

If there are fecal or vomitus accidents in the pool, the water should be emptied and the filter cleaned prior to refilling the pool. The pool sanitizer should be allowed to return to a normal range before allowing anyone to enter the pool. A securing pool cover is an additional safeguard that can be used to prevent access to the pool when not in use. This will also help maintain the pool chemistry and warm the water. Consult your local pool or spa company for advice.

When the pool is emptied the water must be siphoned to the sanitary sewer, not discharged to the ground or to the storm sewer. Pool water contains chemicals which should not enter fish bearing streams or gardens.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Depending on the scope of work undertaken, City-issued Permits may be necessary to allow the installation of a swimming pool (or upgrade/modification of an existing pool). These Permits could be Building, Gas, Electrical, or Plumbing-related, to name a few. As a general guideline, it is wise to check with City staff prior to starting a new project to clarify Permit requirements.

If you have any questions regarding enclosure/siting requirements or would like to clarify Permit applicability, please contact the City at 604-982-WORK (9675). For questions relating to the operation and maintenance of pool systems, please contact the manufacturer or supplier.

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