



**County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services**  
**SWIMMING POOL ENCLOSURE AND SAFETY FEATURE REQUIREMENTS**  
***BUILDING DIVISION***

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The San Diego County Board of Supervisors has amended the swimming pool barrier requirements to help prevent accidental drowning. These requirements apply to any new or modified swimming pool or spa built in the unincorporated area of the County and associated with a one- or two-family dwelling. (Note: Public pools and pools associated with multi-family facilities are subject to pool enclosure and safety feature provisions regulated by the Department of Environmental Health)

In accordance with the County Building Code and California Building Code, swimming pools and spas require the following protection measures against drowning and injury:

- An enclosure separating the pool or spa from neighboring properties
- At least one safety feature accepted by the County of San Diego
- At least one nonredundant safety feature accepted by the State of California
- Entrapment avoidance

This guidance document is intended to inform owners and contractors of the various options available when considering the appropriate enclosure, safety features, and entrapment avoidance measures. All elements of the enclosure, safety features, and entrapment avoidance measures shall be installed, inspected, and approved prior to plastering or filling the pool with water. Pool enclosures also shall meet setback requirements.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**APPROVED SAFETY POOL COVER** means a safety pool cover that meets all of the performance standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), in compliance with Standard F 1346.

**ENCLOSURE** means a fence, wall, or other barrier that prevents access to a swimming pool or spa from neighboring properties and possibly from the home or other habitable buildings on the same lot.

**SWIMMING POOL** means any structure intended for swimming or recreational bathing that contains waters over 18 inches deep, including in-ground, above-ground, and on-ground swimming pools and fixed-in-place wading pools. Note: Spas and hot tubs must comply with these requirements except for self-contained hot tubs or spas equipped with a locking safety cover that is listed to comply with ASTM F 1346.

## PROTECTION MEASURE #1: ENCLOSURE

Swimming pools and spas shall be separated from neighboring properties by a permanent enclosure – i.e., removable fencing or barriers not acceptable – with all of the following characteristics:

- Any pedestrian access gates through the enclosure shall meet the following requirements:
  - Gates shall open away from the swimming pool.
  - Gates shall be self-closing with a self-latching device located a minimum of 54 inches from the bottom of the gate.
  - Where the release mechanism of the self-latching device is located less than 54 inches from the bottom of the gate, the release mechanism shall be located on the pool side of the enclosure at least 3 inches below the top of the gate and the gate and enclosure shall have no opening greater than 1/2 inch within 18 inches of the release mechanism.
  - Any gates other than pedestrian access gates shall be equipped with lockable hardware or padlocks and shall remain locked at all times when not in use.
- Enclosures shall be a minimum height of 60 inches measured on the side of the enclosure that faces away from the swimming pool.
- Maximum vertical clearance from the ground to the bottom of the enclosure shall be 2 inches. The maximum vertical clearance at the bottom of the enclosure may be increased to 4 inches when the grade is a solid surface such as a concrete deck or when the enclosure is mounted on the top of the above-ground pool structure.
- Gaps or voids, if any, shall not allow passage of a sphere equal to or greater than 1-3/4 inches in diameter. For fencing composed of vertical and horizontal members, the spacing between vertical members may be increased up to four inches when the distance between the tops of horizontal members is 45 inches or more.
- Enclosures shall have an outside surface free of protrusions, cavities or other physical characteristics that would serve as handholds or footholds that could enable a child below the age of five years to climb over.
- Chain link fences used to separate the swimming pool from neighboring properties shall not be less than 11.5 gauge and the mesh size shall not be larger than 2-1/4-inch square. Chain link fences used to separate the swimming pool from the home shall not be less than 11.5 gauge and the mesh size shall not be larger than 1-3/4-inch square.

Exception for lots three acres and larger: On a lot or parcel having a net area of three acres or greater, an enclosure separating the swimming pool or space from neighboring properties is not required when the minimum distance measured directly from the closest edge of the pool to the nearest property line is minimum 100 feet AND at least one safety feature listed under protection measure #2 and at least one safety feature listed under protection measure #3 are installed.

## PROTECTION MEASURE #2: SAFETY FEATURE ACCEPTED BY COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Select at least one of the following safety features:

- The pool shall be isolated from access to the home and other habitable buildings on the lot by an enclosure meeting the requirements listed under protection measure #1 above.
- The pool shall be equipped with an electrically operated approved safety pool cover that can be opened or closed with a single switch placed at least 54 inches above the ground.

- The residence shall be equipped with an exit alarm on each door providing direct access to the pool. The alarm system shall:
  - Sound continuously for a minimum of 30 seconds, within seven seconds after the door and its screen, if present, are opened.
  - Be capable of providing a sound pressure level of not less than 85 B when measured indoors at a distance of 10 feet from the alarm.
  - Automatically reset under all conditions.
  - Be equipped with a manual means, such as a touchpad or switch, placed no lower than 54 inches above the floor, to temporarily deactivate the alarm for a single opening, but the alarm shall not be equipped with an on/off switch and deactivation shall be for no more than 15 seconds.
- All doors providing direct access from the home to the swimming pool shall be equipped with a self-closing, self-latching device with a release mechanism placed no lower than 54 inches above the floor. The home shall also have a minimum of one exit door that does not provide direct access to the swimming pool and that complies with exit door regulations of the California Building Code as amended and adopted by the County of San Diego.
- Other means of protection, if the degree of protection afforded is equal to or greater than that afforded by any of the features set forth in the four items above, as determined by the building official.

**PROTECTION MEASURE #3: SAFETY FEATURE ACCEPTED BY STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Select at least one of the following safety features nonredundant with the safety feature(s) selected for protection measure #2 above:

- The pool shall be isolated from access to the home and other habitable buildings on the lot by an enclosure meeting the requirements listed under protection measure #1 above.
- The pool shall incorporate removable mesh pool fencing that meets ASTM F 2286 standards in conjunction with a gate that is self-closing and self-latching and can accommodate a key lockable device.
- The pool shall be equipped with a manually or electrically operated approved safety pool cover that meets all requirements of the ASTM F 1346.
- The residence shall be equipped with exit alarms on those doors providing direct access to the pool.
- All doors providing direct access from the home to the swimming pool shall be equipped with a self-closing, self-latching device with a release mechanism placed no lower than 54 inches above the floor.
- Swimming pool alarms that, when placed in pools, will sound upon detection of accidental or unauthorized entrance into the water. These pool alarms shall meet and be independently certified to the ASTM F 2208, which covers surface motion, pressure, sonar, laser, and infrared type alarms. For purposes of this provision, “swimming pool alarms” shall not include swimming protection alarm devices designed for individual use, such as an alarm attached to a child that sounds when the child exceeds a certain distance or becomes submerged in water.
- Other means of protection, if the degree of protection afforded is equal to or greater than that afforded by any of the devices set forth in the six items above, as determined by the building official and independently verified by an approved testing laboratory as meeting standards for those devices established by the ASTM or the American Society of Testing Mechanical Engineers (ASME).

## **PROTECTION MEASURE #4: ENTRAPMENT AVOIDANCE**

Suction outlets shall be designed to produce circulation throughout the pool or spa. Single-outlet systems, such as automatic vacuum cleaner systems, and multiple suction outlets, whether isolated by valves or otherwise, shall be protected against user entrapment per the following requirements:

- Suction fittings: All pool and spa suction outlets shall be provided with a cover that conforms to ASME A112.19.8M, a 12-inch by 12-inch drain grate or larger, or an approved channel drain system (except surface skimmers).
- Atmospheric vacuum relief system required: All pool and spa single- or multiple-outlet circulation systems shall be equipped with an atmospheric vacuum relief should grate covers located therein become missing or broken. Such vacuum relief systems shall include at least one approved or engineered method of the following types:
  - Safety vacuum release systems conforming to ASME A112.19.17
  - Approved gravity drainage system
- Dual drain separation: Single- or multiple-pump circulation systems shall be provided with a minimum of two suction outlets of the approved type. A minimum horizontal or vertical distance of 3 feet shall separate such outlets. These suction outlets shall be piped so that water is drawn through them simultaneously through a vacuum-relief-protected line to the pump or pumps.
- Pool cleaner fittings: Where provided, vacuum or pressure cleaner fittings shall be located in accessible positions minimum 6 inches and maximum 12 inches below the minimum operational water level or as an attachment to the skimmers.

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Note: Fence gates shall provide access for emergency personnel. Contact your local fire agency for requirements.