

FACT SHEET 2 • SAFETY BARRIERS

Pools & spas are great fun and very tempting for curious children. Every pool & spa must have a barrier and every child must be supervised

Pool and spa barriers are required by legislation for any swimming pool or spa in excess of 300mm in depth and must be maintained for the life of the pool or spa, this includes keeping the area around the safety barrier free from climbable objects or plants that can be used to gain access to the pool area.

The key elements of the relevant Australian Standard, A.S. 1926.1-2012 are designed to restrict access by unsupervised young children, especially those under 5 years of age, to the swimming pool area.

SAFETY BARRIERS

Essentially, a safety barrier can be made of any material that has a reasonable life span when exposed to the likely conditions of weather, pool chemicals, pollution, decay, insects, salt water spray, impacts, etc.

Property owners and occupants are responsible for making sure pool barriers are maintained, repaired and kept in working order.

A new outdoor pool or spa must not have direct access from any building.

Barriers are required for:

- In-ground pools and spas
- Above-ground pools and spas, including inflatable pools, holding more than 300 mm (30 cm) of water
- Indoor pools and spas
- Bathing and wading pools containing more than 300mm (30cm) of water.

Barriers aren't required for:

- Bird baths
- Fountains
- Water supply/storage tanks
- Fishponds

- Dams
- Baths used for personal hygiene and emptied after each use
- Pools or spas which cannot contain a water depth of more than 300 mm (30 cm)
- Inflatable swimming pools (typically toddler or wading pools) which cannot contain a water depth greater than 300 mm (30 cm)
- Spas inside a building used for personal hygiene (a spa bath in a bathroom that's emptied after each use).

Safety barriers must have an effective perpendicular minimum height of 1.2 metres. Existing boundary fences can be used as a safety barrier provided that they are well maintained, at least 1800mm high measured on the inside of the barrier to a solid finished surface and have no climbable elements within 900mm measured from the top of the inside of the fence.

GATES

These must open outward only (away from the pool area) and have an effective perpendicular minimum height of 1.2 metres.

They must return to the closed position and engage the latch automatically from any position and not re-open without using the manual release mechanism. The latch release must be at least 1.5 metres above ground level unless it (i) is inside the fence (ii) can only be reached over or through a fence higher than 1.2 metres or (iii) is 300mm below the fence top (no hand hole) or at least 150mm away from the edge of any hand hole opening. Latch releases less than 1.5 metres above ground level must be shielded so that no opening greater than 10mm is closer than 450mm. Any hand hole shall be at least 1.2 metres above ground level.

WALLS

External walls of a building can be used as swimming pool barriers so long as they do not contain any doors opening into the pool area and windows are treated to prevent access to the pool area.

TEMPORARY BARRIERS

During construction, if the new pool is filled with water more than 300 mm (30 cm) deep it must be guarded against being a danger to life and safety with a temporary safety barrier as required by the Relevant Building Surveyor.

A temporary barrier should be installed where a pool is not self-draining and could collect rainwater during construction.

This is especially important where the site is occupied during construction.

No pool or spa should be filled until the building surveyor has completed their final inspection.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING TEMPORARY BARRIERS

Property owner not living on site

When the builder responsible for the work has vacant possession (where nobody is living on the site), they must maintain the temporary pool barrier.

Property owner is living on site

If anyone is living at the property during the construction work, the pool builder is responsible for maintaining the temporary pool barrier while they're on site. The occupant may be responsible for maintaining the temporary barrier when the builder isn't on the site depending on responsibilities set out in the building contract.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF POOL AND SPA BARRIERS

The owner of the pool or spa is responsible for ensuring that the barrier and any gates are operating effectively, and that the barrier is properly maintained once the certificate of final inspection has been issued.

Gates must be self-closing and latching and must not be propped open. No climbable objects should be located near the barrier and any gaps or weak spots in or around the barrier must be repaired.

Occupants of a rental property must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the barrier is operating effectively and should report any faults with a barrier to their landlord.

The VBA has produced checklists to help pool and spa owners check the compliance of pool barriers.

While these precautions go a long way to protect children, always actively supervise children around water.

Self-Assessment Checklists

www.vba.vic.gov.au/consumers/swimming-pools

Voluntary Pool & Spa Register

www.vba.vic.gov.au/consumers/swimming-pools/swimming-pool-and-spa-register

DOORS & WINDOWS

Doors from a dwelling are prohibited from opening into a swimming pool area. The only exception is for doors opening directly to an indoor swimming pool or spa.

Acceptable window fixing treatments are as follows:

- Those totally enclosed by screw fixed security screens that can only be removed by the use of a tool
- Those that are fixed so the window cannot open more than 100mm max
- Those with a lowest opening panel not less than 1.8 above the ground level to the pool area
- Those that have firm fixed metal fly-wire installed that is fixed to the building with fasteners that can only be removed by the use of a tool

This is only a general summary of A.S 1926.1. Please refer to your local SPASA Victoria member or the VBA for more information.

