



POOL SAFETY COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PSC Exposes Myths Surrounding Landmark Pool Safety Legislation

Misinformation will be costly to public pools and cause shutdowns

WASHINGTON, DC – January 23, 2009 – The Pool Safety Council (PSC), the authoritative voice on pool safety, entrapment and drowning prevention, today addresses two major myths surrounding the landmark pool safety legislation passed by Congress late last year, the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act. These myths have been erroneously reported in media of late as well as repeated by at least one state official in California.

Myth #1: Pools need to shut down and be drained in order for the new, approved drain cover to be installed.

Reality: The law does not require that pools be drained at any time in order to become compliant with the new federal standards. The law only requires that dual drain pools be retrofitted with new, approved safety drain covers, which can be installed easily, safely and effectively while the pool is full. Single drain pools, with a main drain that is blockable in size, are required by law to not only be refitted with approved safety drain covers but also with an anti-entrapment device.

Myth #2: Single-drain pools must be emptied, dug up and be refitted with a second drain in order to be in compliance with the VGB Act.

Reality: Again, the law does not require single-drain pools to be refitted with a second drain in order to be safe. Rather, it stipulates that all pools must install new, approved safety drain covers; and that single drain public pools, other than those with an un-blockable drain, must install approved safety drain covers and an anti-entrapment device or system, such as a Safety Vacuum Release System (SVRS) to come into compliance. Nationwide, over 100,000 such SVRS systems have been installed successfully.

Yesterday, the PSC asked the Attorney General of California to investigate the dangerous recommendations by an inspector in Los Angeles County who has unilaterally rejected the compliance guidelines of the federal law and demanded that pools be drained in order to comply with VGB guidelines.

Emptying pools in order to install a new drain cover is costly and unnecessary. First, empty pools are at risk of structural damage, especially if they are exposed to the elements for an extended period. Heat and groundwater can lead to cracking and other damage. Even heavy rainfall can push entire, empty inground pools out of the ground. Public pools, which are affected by the new federal legislation, may not have the resources to handle these outcomes. More importantly, they are unnecessary risks that need not be taken in order to comply with the law.

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The Consumer Product Safety Commission says that 2,300 children were treated in emergency rooms for pool submersion injuries in 2004. Entrapment occurs when supercharged suction from insufficiently covered drains pins a swimmer underwater, sometimes preventing their escape. Congress passed the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act in honor of the granddaughter of former Secretary of State James A. Baker, who died after being trapped in a spa drain in 2002.

For more information, please visit our website at: www.poolsafetycouncil.org.