

# Durbin urges fix of pool drain hazard

## Chicago Tribune investigation found problems with safety equipment

By Patricia Callahan, Tribune reporter  
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Responding to a Chicago Tribune investigation, U.S. Sen. [Dick Durbin](#) on Tuesday urged the nation's top consumer product regulator to resolve problems with federally mandated pool safety equipment that may fail to protect swimmers from a drowning hazard.

A law passed after the death of a 7-year-old girl requires public pools and hot tubs to install drain covers designed to prevent the drains from turning into super-charged vacuums that can trap people underwater with hundreds of pounds of force. The Tribune revealed that popular models underwent flawed safety evaluations, then failed more stringent tests.

Accreditation authorities reviewing the lab that certified most of these products last year documented that the facility used inadequate equipment and performed federally mandated tests in ways that do not mirror conditions in real pools or spas, the Tribune found.

Federal regulators have known about the safety concerns for more than two years but did not launch an investigation until July and have not completed that probe, the Tribune found.

In a letter to the chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Durbin, D-Ill., criticized the agency for undermining the intent of the law, which he co-sponsored, and allowing inadequate testing of the safety equipment.

"This appears to have allowed dangerous drain covers to continue being sold and distributed," Durbin wrote Inez Tenenbaum, chairman of the agency. "The issues highlighted by the Tribune story are very concerning and raise serious questions, not only about dangerous drains but also about accreditation of testing facilities on products generally."

A spokesman for Tenenbaum said she "understands his concern" and was setting up a briefing with Durbin's office.

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