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Pool Safety Council: Ohio Swimming Pool Meets Federal Safety Requirements Without Breaking the Bank

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Though there is still confusion in some areas over how to comply with the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act, a growing number of public pool operators are finding compliance is not as difficult – or expensive – as previously believed.

An Ohio newspaper reported Thursday that the Village of West Jefferson recently installed safety drain covers to comply with the federal Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act. Parks and Recreation Director Jack McDowell said doing so brought them into compliance with the federal legislation without breaking the bank. “This set up allowed us to not have to tear up the concrete bottom of the main pool around the drain to be compliant with the new federal regulations,” McDowell told *The Madison Press*.

There was more good news in Madison County. In the same report, Village of Plain City Administrator Steve Hilbert said they had recently submitted plans for approval to state officials that, if accepted, will bring their pool into compliance for substantially less money than they had originally feared. Hilbert told the Pool Safety Council that an inspector at first signaled they would need to install a new drain system, which would cost upwards of \$20,000. But after researching available options, Hilbert found that installing a Safety Vacuum Release System, along with the necessary drain covers, would only cost \$6,000. “That’s much cheaper, and we’ll still be in compliance and not have to worry about it,” Hilbert said.

Named after the granddaughter of former Secretary of State James Baker, the Pool and Spa Safety Act requires public swimming pools to have measures in place to prevent drain entrapment, the horrific occurrence of a swimmer becoming trapped by the suction force of a pool drain. Virginia Graeme Baker died in an entrapment accident in 2002. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recorded 74 entrapment incidents between 1997 and 2007, most of the victims being children.

The Pool Safety Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to fighting drain entrapment and child drowning, has worked to spread the word about the important legislation. There are many reports around the country of pools struggling to understand the law, sometimes as a result of guidance from local officials which conflicts with the federal law.

But pools like those in Madison are showing how easy it can be. “We applaud the Madison-area pools for finding affordable, practical solutions for complying with the Pool and Spa Safety Act,” PSC spokesman John Procter

said. “Officials in Plain City and West Jefferson have shown that it is possible to meet the law’s requirements without emptying budget coffers or shutting pools on the eve of the summer swim season. We are encouraged to see stories like these, and hope to see more coverage of compliance efforts as pool operators make these important modifications.”

For more information on the Pool Safety Council, visit www.poolsafetycouncil.org.