



**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. The requirements apply to all new pools and spas built in the unincorporated area of the County. The County Building Code requires that a swimming pool be separated from neighboring properties by an enclosure plus an additional safety feature as described below. This handout is intended to inform owners and contractors of the various options available when considering the appropriate enclosure and safety features to be installed as well as to inform them of the requirements for entrapment avoidance. All elements of the enclosure, safety features, and entrapment avoidance measures must be installed, inspected and approved prior to plastering or filling the pool with water. Pool barriers must meet setback requirements.

**Definitions**

**APPROVED SAFETY POOL COVER** means a power-operated safety pool cover that meets all of the performance standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), in compliance with Standard F 1346-91.

**ENCLOSURE** means a fence, wall or other barrier than isolates a swimming pool from neighboring properties and possibly access to 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. This includes 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, which are equipped with a locking safety cover that is listed to comply with ASTM F 1346-91.

**Enclosure Requirements**  
***(Inspected during pre-plaster inspection)***

- 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 three inches below the top of the gate and the gate and enclosure shall have no opening greater than ½ 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 two inches. The maximum vertical clearance at the bottom of the enclosure may be increased to four 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 ¾ 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 ¼ -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 ¾ -inch square.

**Additional Safety Features**

**\*Pools shall be separated from neighboring properties by an enclosure described above AND shall be equipped with at least ONE of the following safety features:**

**SELECT THE SPECIFIC SAFETY MEASURE PROPOSED FOR THIS PROJECT**

- 1. The pools shall be isolated from access to a home and other habitable buildings on the lot by an enclosure that meets the requirements listed in the previous section.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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
- 4. 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 2010 California Building Code as amended and adopted by the County of San Diego.
- 5. 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 Items 1-4 above, as determined by the building official.

**Exception for Lots Three Acres and Larger**

On a lot or parcel having a net area of three acres or greater, a swimming pool enclosure that separates the pool from neighboring properties is not required when:

- the minimum distance from the closest edge of the pool, measured directly to the nearest property line is at least 100 feet; and
- at least ONE of the safety features above must be installed.

### **Entrapment Avoidance Requirements**

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

1. 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).
2. 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 type specified herein, as follows:
  - Safety vacuum release systems conforming to ASME A112.19.17; or
  - Approved gravity drainage system.
3. 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 three 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.
4. Pool cleaner fittings: Where provided, vacuum or pressure cleaner fitting(s) shall be located in an accessible position(s) at least six inches and not greater than 12 inches below the minimum operational water level or as an attachment to the skimmer(s).

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