



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
Division of Fire and Building Safety
Bureau of State Building Inspector

DATE: June 21, 1991
TO: All Building Officials
FROM: Donald J. Vigneau, AIA
RE: Subsection 625.9 "Swimming pool safety devices"

The 1987 Boca National Building Code, subsection 625.9 "Swimming pool safety devices" states, in part;

All gates shall be self-closing and self-latching with latches placed 4 feet (1219mm) above the underlying ground and otherwise made inaccessible from the outside to small children.

Swimming pools erected above ground with the pool walls being at least 4 feet above the surrounding grade provides a continuous barrier which will make the pool inaccessible to small children. A problem arises when a pool ladder is installed or a deck with stairs is attached to the pool. These points of entry shall be protected with barriers and gates as required above, regardless of whether a ladder or stairs are fixed and permanent, or portable and removable.

If you have any questions, please contact this office.

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BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS FOR SWIMMING POOLS ESSENTIAL TO SAFETY OF CHILDREN

Each year the Bureau of State Building Inspector offers local building officials reminders of code requirements for swimming pools. Both in-the-ground and above-ground pools are commonplace, not only in suburban Connecticut but also wherever there is room for a pool, even in the state's largest cities.

A fence, required under Subsection 616.9, 1986 BOCA supplement, must enclose pools containing 24 or more inches of water depth at any point. Construction of a fence is the responsibility of the owner of the land which has the swimming pool on it.

Exceptions are made only when an above-ground pool is four feet or higher from the ground at ALL points. However, when a portable ladder is used for entry into this pool, thus making it accessible to small children, a fence with self-closing and self-latching gate is required.

It is possible in such a case, to enclose only the access area to the ladder, removing access to the above-ground pool to small children.

When an above-ground pool is on land that varies in grade, allowing children access at one point, a fence attached to the pool where it is less than four feet from the ground, will comply with the code requirement.

The code is very specific about the required pool enclosure, the acceptable design of fences, gates and latches. It states that "the enclosure shall be not less than four feet above the underlying ground. All gates shall be self-closing and self-latching, with latches placed four feet above the underlying ground."

It requires also that "the fence around the pool shall be sound and secure and of sufficient strength to restrain children from entering the pool. The design of the fence shall be as such that young children cannot climb it and a sphere with a diameter of six inches cannot pass through any opening."

Pool owners wishing to substitute a natural barrier for a fence, whether it is a "hedge, pool cover" or any other protective device to be used in lieu of a fence enclosure, are required to provide "no less protection" than a fence with self-latching gate. Any property owner wishing to make such a substitute must seek a modification from the Bureau of State Building Inspector. The site must be inspected and the decision as to the safety of the barrier and whether it qualifies for a modification of the code requirement, will be made by the State Building Inspector and the Codes and Standards Committee.

The code requirement is met if the entire pool area is enclosed with a fence not less than four feet high. It must have a self-closing and self-latching gate, with latches placed four feet above ground.

In some situations, the entire pool is enclosed by a fence that reaches all the way to the house. In this case, the door from the house that opens to the pool area, must be self-closing and self-latching as well as the outside gate to the fence.

There are specific code requirements that address pool associate motors and how they must be grounded. Information about these requirements and some of the exceptions that are allowed, is available from Larry Acquarulo, Bureau of State Building Inspector, 238-6011.

Supposed "safety devices" such as thermal blankets and pool covers, claimed by some to provide security, can actually make it more difficult for someone to get out after slipping into the pool. These should be used only to fulfill a specific function and have no relation to safety.