

The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act is active

IMPORTANT: Please read the following article if your organization has a pool or if you take children on field trips to a local pool.

The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act is now a federal law and is applicable to every state. All organizations that are equipped with a public swimming pool or wading pool, regardless of depth, must be compliant with this law prior to opening their pool for the 2009 swim season, or as of December 19, 2008, for year-round swimming pools. It is also recommended that policyholders using third-party facilities verify compliance prior to use. You can learn more about the history behind the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act at <http://sk.convio.net/site/PageNavigator/Campaigns/PoolSpaSafetyAct%20/CampaignPoolStory>.

The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act requires all public pool owners/operators (states will define your pool as public pool) to be compliant in three key areas:

- Install covers on every drain grate that meet the American National Standard published by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers - ASME A112.19.8 – 2007, "Suction Fittings for Use in Swimming Pools, Wading Pools, Spas, and Hot Tubs."
- Install an automatic shut-off system, gravity drainage system, Safety Vacuum Release System (SVRS), suction-limiting vent system, or disable the drain, if the pool operates off of a single main drain. Pools and spas with unblockable drains (drains larger than 18" x 23") are exempt from this requirement.
- Ensure that dual or multiple main drains are at least 3 feet apart.

If you take children to a public pool facility, it is also important to make sure the pool is in compliance with this law prior to allowing children access to that pool.

Because your state's law may be more restrictive than the federal law, it is imperative that you check with your state or local department of health, state attorney general's office, or other available resources addressing your local legislation. Pool installers who are certified to offer an inspection of your pool can be consulted for compliance as well. But use caution by obtaining written estimates, modification plans, and how these plans bring your pool into compliance before agreeing to have any work completed.

Websites that offer additional information include:

www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prhtml09/09065.html
www.nspf.org/FPSSA.html

A list of drain cover and SVRS manufacturers can be found at:

www.cpsc.gov/whatsnew.html#pool

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Pool owners may have difficulty meeting their respective compliance dates due to the cost associated with repairs ranging from two hundred to several thousand dollars, along with possible delays in receiving compliant drain covers. If you are unable to comply with the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act as specified, the Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that you keep your pool closed until you can satisfy the requirements of this law. Cordon off the area to secure it from unauthorized use, and keep the pool under tight supervision to reduce the likelihood of someone falling in it.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.