

# Pool fencing requirements



Source: Kids Health SCHN

Inadequate pool fencing remains a major contributing factor in the rate of drowning among children under 5 years of age.

Key pool safety requirements in NSW are outlined below. The Office of Local Government is responsible for administering these laws. To make sure you meet your full legal responsibilities, **please contact your local council for more detailed information.**

Please be aware that the pool fencing laws relate to NSW only - there are different laws in other Australian states and territories.

## Pool fencing laws

The requirements for child-resistant barriers vary depending on when the pool was built and where the pool is located.

### Pools built before 1 August 1990

Access to the pool from the house must be restricted at all times. Windows and doors may form part of the barrier, but they must be compliant.

### Pools built after 1 August 1990 but before 1 July 2010

The pool must be surrounded by a fence that separates the pool from the house. Some exemptions apply if the pool is part of:

- a very small property (less than 230 square metres)
- a large property (2 hectares or over)
- a waterfront property.

### Pools built from 1 July 2010

All new pools must be surrounded by a fence that separates the pool from the house.

### Inflatable pools

Owners of premises with swimming pools, including inflatable swimming pools, must ensure their pools comply with fencing laws.

### Key pool fence measurements

Pool owners should ensure that their fencing meets the required measurements below. This is to stop a young child being able to squeeze under or between gaps in a fence, or being able to climb over it.

In NSW, a pool fence must:

- be at least 1.2m high (as measured from the finished ground level)
- not leave a gap at the bottom bigger than 10cm from the finished ground level
- not have gaps of more than 10cm between any vertical bars in the fence
- if containing horizontal climbable bars, have these spaced at least 90cm apart.

For diagrams showing these measurements and other NSW pool safety criteria, refer to the Pool Safety Booklet (compiled on behalf of 12 NSW councils).

If your pool fencing does not satisfy these requirements, contact a licensed builder, pool technician or fencing contractor straight away.

### **Non-climbable zone**

To prevent children climbing over fencing into the pool area, the laws require pool owners to make sure they maintain a 'non-climbable zone' around the pool.

Any trees, shrubs or any other objects such as a barbeque, pot plants, toys, ladders and chairs must not be within the 90cm non climbable zone. This zone is measured in an arc shape from the top of the pool fence arching towards the ground. It also includes the space extending 30cm inside the pool area - this space should also be cleared of any potential footholds or handholds.

Any horizontal climbable bars on the pool fence must also be spaced AT LEAST 90cm apart.

If your pool area does not meet these requirements, you can contact a licensed builder, pool technician or fencing contractor to carry out work in line with these safety requirements.

### **Child-resistant doors and windows**

Some older swimming pools might include doors or windows as part of the pool fence or barrier. This is no longer allowed in for any new pools being built.

### **Doors in pool barriers**

If you have a door that forms part of a pool barrier you must make sure that:

- it self closes
- it self latches
- the latching device is at least 150cm off the ground
- it has a non climbable zone of 90cm that is at least 120cm above the floor
- it opens outwards from the pool enclosure
- it does not have any pet doors.

If all of the above criteria are not satisfied, you will need to take the necessary action to ensure that any door that is part of a pool barrier complies with these requirements.

## Windows in pool barriers

If you have windows that form part of a pool barrier, they must have a locking device or a security screen that prevents them from opening more than 10cm.

If it does not satisfy this requirement, you will need to install a locking device or security screen that reduces the gap to 10cm or less. Locking devices and security screens can be purchased from your local hardware store. Make sure you also seek advice from your local council, accredited private certifier or licensed builder.

## Gate closing and latching devices

Check to ensure that your pool gate:

- is never propped open and is always kept shut
- swings outwards (away from the pool area). If it does not swing outwards, the gate must be re-hung so that it does.
- shuts automatically from any open position, without having to forcibly close it.
- automatically locks (self-latches) when it closes.

If the gate does not shut and lock automatically, the pool gate should be permanently fastened until a new lock and closing device can be installed. Self-closing and self-latching devices can be purchased from most pool and hardware shops and can be easily installed.

## Pool fence and gate maintenance

All fence bolts, screws and fasteners must be tight and in good order. Any loose bolts, screws and fasteners should be tightened or replaced.

Self-closing gate hinges, locks and latches should be sprayed with lubricating oil or silicone.

Manufacturers of the pool fence and gate should provide written instructions on how to maintain your pool fence and gate. This may include the regular replacement of springs and regular spraying of self-closing gate hinges, locks and latches with lubricating oil or silicone.

Proper maintenance can help to prevent many of the faults relating to self-closing and self-latching gates.

## Protect Your Pool, Protect Your Kids video

The Children's Hospital, Westmead, commissioned a video covering a range of pool safety topics. If you own a pool, watch the short video and follow its safety messages and techniques.

The video can be accessed from the Swimming pool fencing page on the Hospital's Kids Health site (<http://kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au>)

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