

# Spa pools

## Safety guidelines for consumers

Spa pools are commonly found in homes throughout Australia. Consumers need to be aware spa pools can be hazardous, particularly if not correctly installed and maintained.

These spa pool safety guidelines have been produced to help consumers determine the safety of their spa and minimise the risk of injury from spa pool use.

## Registration and certification requirements

Drowning is a leading cause of preventable death in children under 5 years of age. In 2012, the *Swimming Pools Act 1992* was amended to improve the safety of children around swimming pools in NSW.

The changes include:

- Swimming pool owners must register their swimming pool or spa pool on the NSW Swimming Pool Register.
- Local councils and accredited certifiers registered with the Building Professionals Board, can carry out inspections of swimming pools.

- **From 29 April 2016** a copy of a valid certificate of compliance or relevant occupation certificate must be attached to new residential tenancy agreements to rent property with a swimming pool or spa pool. This requirement does not apply to a lot in strata or community schemes that have more than two lots.
- **From 29 April 2016** one of the following must be attached to the sales contract for a property with a swimming pool or spa pool:
  - a copy of a valid certificate of compliance or;
  - relevant occupation certificate and evidence that the pool has been registered or;
  - a valid certificate of non-compliance.

This requirement **does not** apply

- to a lot in strata or community schemes that have more than two lots, or
- for any off-the-plan contract.

For more information about these pool safety requirements, visit the Office of Local Government's website or ask your local council.

## Spa pools and child safety

If your spa pool does not have a fence around it, you must either install a fence or ensure that the spa is covered and secured by a lockable child-safe structure (such as a door, lid, grille or mesh) when the spa is not in use.

Please visit the pool safety checklists page on the NSW Swimming Pool Register for further information.

## Avoiding entrapment on suction outlets

In Australia and overseas there have been a number of fatalities and injuries linked to poorly designed, installed and maintained spas. Fatalities and injuries usually result from users, particularly children, being trapped by the suction outlet systems of spas, including active main drains in the floors of spas.

The major hazard of spa pools is the danger of trapping your hair or a part of your body on the spa suction outlets.

To help avoid entrapment, it is important that all spas have two functioning suction outlets which are a minimum of 600 millimetres apart. If the suction outlets do not meet these requirements seek the advice of a licensed pool builder or licensed builder.

If you have concerns about the way suction outlets are operating, seek the immediate advice of a licensed builder, pool builder or call the Swimming Pool & Spa Association of NSW (SPASA) on 9747 6644. Check on the Fair Trading website if a pool builder is licensed or call 13 32 20.

## Australian standards

Under Australian Standard AS 2610.2, the requirements for *entrapment hazards* (in facilities such as spa pools) are as follows:

- Spa pools should be designed so pressure will be immediately released at a suction point from the spa pool if it becomes blocked.
- Each pump should have a minimum of two operative suction points connected by a common line.
- Suction points should be fitted as close as possible to the water surface as is practical without effecting the operation of the system.
- The suction points shall not be closer than 600mm.
- An emergency stop switch controlling all spa pool pumps, blowers and heaters shall be provided within 3 metres of the spa pool and shall be visible at all times.

## Minimise risks

There are other steps and checks consumers should follow to minimise the risk of injury from spa pool use:

- If you own an older spa pool with a potty-style skimmer box (which resembles a child's potty), ensure that the skimmer box has a lid and that it is secured by glue or screwed down in place so it cannot easily be removed.
- Ensure there are two outlets for each pump in your spa as this reduces the powerful suction if one drain becomes blocked.
- Check the covers of any spa suction outlets are not damaged and are firmly and properly affixed using the manufacturer's recommended parts.
- If you have a portable spa, make sure you use a locked safety cover or lid when the spa is not in use.
- Always keep young children away from spas unless there is constant adult supervision.
- If your spa has a cut-off switch for the pump, know where it is so you can turn it off in an emergency.
- Check that all suction outlets are operating, so they do not present an entrapment risk for the body, hair, fingers or toes.
- Ensure that all electrical components and pumps meet electrical safety requirements and are properly covered. This can be done by checking they are marked with an electrical safety approval number or a Regulatory Compliance Mark.
- A person should not put their head under the water in a spa as this may increase the risk of entrapment.
- A person with long hair should be particularly careful to avoid putting their head near outlets.
- If you are purchasing a spa, ask the supplier for proof that it is designed to minimise the likelihood of entrapment and complies with recognised Australian and international standards.

## In case of emergency

If you do not have a cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) sign that is near your spa, in good condition and can be read from a distance of 3 metres, buy and install one.

You can buy a CPR sign from your local pool shop, Council or community organisations such as St John Ambulance, the Australian Red Cross or The Royal Life Saving Society.

## More information

For further advice on keeping your existing spa in safe condition and minimising safety risks associated with spa ownership, contact SPASA on 9747 6644 or your local council.

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[www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)  
Fair Trading enquiries 13 32 20  
TTY 1300 723 404  
Language assistance 13 14 50

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