

A photograph of a swimming pool with blue tiles and a drain cover. The water is clear and blue, reflecting the sky. The tiles are arranged in a grid pattern. A drain cover is visible on the wall of the pool.

Pool and Spa Safety Enhancements in the 2009 I-Codes

by Carvin DiGiovanni

At last year's Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, ICC members overwhelmingly approved adoption of American National Standards Institute/Association of Pool & Spa Professionals (ANSI/APSP) 7, *Standard for Suction Entrapment Avoidance in Swimming Pools, Wading Pools, Spas, Hot Tubs and Catch Basins*, in the 2009 editions of the *International Building Code (IBC)* and *International Residential Code (IRC)*. While the 2006 codes addressed some forms of entrapment, they did not provide protection against hair entrapment, evisceration or mechanical entrapment (of, for example, jewelry or clothing).

Adoption of ANSI/APSP-7 into the body of the codes brings them in line with the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act by requiring that drain covers meet the 2007 edition of American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)/ANSI A112.19.8, *Suction Fittings for Use in Swimming Pools, Wading Pools, Spas, and Hot Tubs*, which requires improved fastening so that covers are less likely to come loose and improved resistance to hair entrapment.

ANSI/APSP-7 also regulates water velocity, the most important protection against hair entrapment. New construction can now employ properly configured multiple outlets, an unblockable outlet or no outlets. A backup

device such as a safety vacuum release system, an engineered vent system, a gravity drainage system or an automatic pump shut-off device is still required for a pool or spa with a single main drain other than a single “unblockable” main drain, but such devices are no longer required with properly configured multiple drains. The latest editions of the codes are also consistent with the recommendation of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and numerous state laws which require that a pool or spa be closed to bathers if a drain cover is broken or missing, and allow for the option of building pools without drains—thus eliminating the potential hazard altogether. Simply put: there is no such thing as a “backup” to a broken or missing drain cover. Because some forms of entrapment can occur even when a pump is not turned on, having approved covers securely in place is the only thing that can prevent all forms of entrapment.

Complimentary copies of ANSI/APSP-7 are available to ICC governmental members at www.iccsafe.org/cs/pmg/apsp.html. ♦

CARVIN DiGIOVANNI, *Senior Director, Technical and Standards, of the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals (formerly the National Spa and Pool Institute), helped facilitate the development of ANSI/APSP-7 and assisted in the development of the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act. He recently received the National Drowning Prevention Alliance Community Lifesaver Award in honor of his work in the advancement of drowning prevention within the pool, spa and hot tub industry.*

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