



## City of Phoenix

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
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### **INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS FOR POOL BARRIERS**

In April 1990, the City Council adopted code changes that strengthen City requirements for enclosure of Swimming Pools. This publication is intended to inform owners and contractors of the various options available when considering the appropriate barrier between residences and swimming pools located on the same property. Also included are reminders of requirements, so customers are prepared for the inspection process and help assure completion of the pool is not delayed.

Two inspections (pre-gunite and pre-plaster) are conducted to ensure swimming pools comply with Phoenix Construction Code life/safety provisions. One set of life/safety provisions concern barrier requirements to help prevent accidental drowning. In addition to the fence separating a pool from neighboring properties, three options are available to address the requirement of providing a physical barrier between a house and a swimming pool located on the same property. One option is to construct an inner barrier fence around the entire pool. Other options include utilizing the residence wall within the pool enclosure as part of the approved barrier, or use of a motorized safety cover which complies with ASTM F 1345. The following is an example of requirements:

#### **BARRIER FENCE REQUIREMENTS** (*Inspected during pre-plaster inspection*)

- The fence must be five feet high measured from the exterior side of the fence.
- There can not any holes or openings that would allow a four-inch ball to pass through.
- Maximum vertical clearance between grade and the bottom of the barrier shall be two inches, measured on the side of the barrier that faces away from the pool, or four inches, when grade is a solid surface, such as concrete.
- Minimum of 45 inches between horizontal bars, toeholds or handholds to prevent climbing, or provide a maximum 1 ¾ inches of space between vertical bars.
- Wire mesh or chain link to provide a maximum opening size of 1 ¾ inches measured horizontally.

#### **GATES**

- Must be self-closing and self-latching and able to accommodate a lock.
- Must swing outward from the pool area.
- Latch must be 54 inches minimum above ground.
- Must meet same construction requirements as the barrier fence.
- Non-pedestrian gates over 4 feet wide such as double-gates for vehicles, must be padlocked if not self-closing / self-latching.

#### **IF USING HOUSE WALL AS A PART OF A BARRIER**

An adult must be present during the inspection if belongings or minors are in the home. The house must be open for the inspector to verify the following during pre-plaster inspection:

- All doors must be self-closing and self-latching and must swing outward from the pool area.
  - A simple latch or lock located a minimum of 54 inches above the floor, or a double-keyed dead bolt at any height is acceptable.
- Animal or doggie doors are not allowed.
- All sliding glass doors shall be self-closing and self-latching with an approved automatic door closer or;
  - Provide a separate fence; or
  - Replace the sliding glass door with a self-closing hinged door; or
  - Bolt the door shut (Option not available if this is the only door to the pool area from the room).
  - Removable pins or locks which prevent the door from opening are not sufficient to meet this safety code.
- Window latches must be at 54 inches minimum above floor; or
  - Except for bedroom egress windows, screwed in "stops" (not thumb screws) may be used to limit window openings to four inches; or
  - Except for bedroom egress windows, provide a screwed-in-place wire mesh screen.
- Windows, where the bottom edge is less than 60 inches above the pool decks and in within five feet of the water's edge, must be tempered glass.
- Areas outside of windows or doors that otherwise cannot be made to comply with barrier and egress requirements must be fenced.

## **POOL BARRIER REQUIREMENTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **ARE OTHER OPTIONS ACCEPTABLE?**

- The code-required minimum barrier must be an automatically closing physical barrier--thus, a self-closing, self-latching door or gate. Other protective devices like temporary fences or alarms do **NOT** meet these criteria. However, other options are encouraged (not mandated) as an "additional layer of protection" for small children. These could include:
  - Both self-closing doors and a separate fence
  - Alarms on house doors
  - In-water pool alarms
  - Additional temporary fencing

### **WHEN IS THE INNER YARD BARRIER REQUIRED?**

- With all new swimming pools permitted after May 4, 1990.
- Whenever an addition or alteration is made to any part of an existing pool enclosure (such as a change to a fence or to the wall of a house), then the new work must comply with the new barrier standards. *EXAMPLE: If you change a door to the backyard, the door must be made self-closing if it is part of the barrier.*
- **AFTER MAY 4, 1991**, a barrier between the house, apartment or hotel room and the pool **IS REQUIRED** on:
  - All public or semi-public pools such as at apartments, hotels and resorts.
  - All single family pools where the pool is accessible to children under age six. This means whenever a child resides in the house or regularly visits the property, such as in a day care or baby-sitter situation, or a relative's house.
  - These barriers are required to be installed retroactively, even if the pool was built before 1991.

### **WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE CHILDREN IN MY HOME?**

If the pool was permitted prior to May 4, 1990, the ordinance provides an exception to require retroactive installation of inner yard barriers if children under six do not reside in or regularly visit the home. In this case, the ordinance does not state that the pool owner remains responsible for providing a temporary physical barrier when an occasional child visits the property. Additions and remodels to existing homes that are covered by the exception do not need to comply with the ordinance as long as the owner can prove that the status of the house has not changed since May 4, 1990.

### **WHAT ABOUT A FENCE BUILT BEFORE 1990?**

- For pools permitted prior to May 4, 1990, a grandfather clause allows existing inner yard barriers to stay in place if they are at least 4 feet high and otherwise meet prior barrier standards. Newly installed fences must always be 5 feet high.

### **IF MY CHILD GROWS UP OR MOVES AWAY, CAN I TAKE DOWN THE BARRIER?**

- **NO!** The barrier may *not* be removed! The current standard is intended to eventually apply to all existing pools. The exception is intended to minimize impact on existing pools not currently accessible to small children.

### **WHEN MUST THE BARRIER BE INSTALLED?**

- Immediately for existing pools accessible to small children.
- Before the pre-plaster inspection for new pools.

This publication can be made available in alternate formats (Braille, large print, electronic, or audiotope) upon request. Contact the Development Services Department at (602) 262-7811 (voice) or (602) 534-5500 (TTY).