



## Virginia Graeme Baker Pool & Spa Safety Act

The “Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act” became federal law on December 19, 2007. The act was passed to prevent entrapment injuries and deaths at swimming pools and spas.

The full text of the law and a Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) interpretation of the requirements can be found on our Web site: [http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/swimming\\_pools.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/swimming_pools.asp). More information can be found at the National Swimming Pool Foundation site, [www.nspf.org](http://www.nspf.org).

This document represents our best understanding of what individual facilities will need to do to comply with the law. Iowa regulations have not changed yet, but **every public pool and spa is obligated to comply with the law**. IDPH will be changing its rules to conform to the Act, likely before the 2009 swimming season.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is the federal agency responsible for enforcing the law. CPSC issued an interpretations document in June 2008 outlining the requirements of the law.

1. According to CPSC, **every main drain and every fully submerged suction outlet must be covered with a grate or fitting complying with ASME/ANSI A112.19.8-2007**, a standard addressing the structural strength of suction outlet covers and requiring that the covers be designed to prevent entrapment, **by December 20, 2008**. Seasonal pools must comply before they open in 2009.  
**None of the drain covers that you have in your pools and spas now comply with the standard** (except possibly a very few round 8” covers). Rectangular drain covers in standard sizes (9x9, 12x12, 18x18) are being tested by national testing agencies. They may start to be available in October and November. Compliant covers will be stamped with the testing agency mark (NSF, UL, UPC), the standard number and a limiting flow rate.
2. If you have 2 or more main drains that meet Iowa requirements for size, replacing the covers is all you will have to do.
3. If you have a pool, wading pool or spa with just **one main drain that is directly connected to a pump**, at least one other change is required. The law provides several options: We list some of the options here. Check the law for additional options.
  - You can make the drain “unblockable.” CPSC considers a drain unblockable if it cannot be covered with an 18” x 23” rectangle with rounded corners. Examples would include 24” x 24” grates, long thin rectangular grates, or a round cover at least 24” in diameter.
  - You can install a safety vacuum release system (SVRS), a mechanical device that will stop the pump or otherwise relieve the suction at a drain.
  - You can disable the drain. This will require evaluation of the inlets and outlets for the pool.

**All of these options require review by IDPH**, though we do not anticipate charging fees for these reviews.

A significant question remains about large main drain grates that have been installed for many municipal pools. The law does not specifically exempt them and CPSC has not addressed how the large drain covers can be brought into compliance.

**We recommend you contact your pool supply or service company now about options for your facility.** Questions about compliance may be directed to Michael Magnant, (515)281-8722, [mmagnant@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:mmagnant@idph.state.ia.us).