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New federal legislation means every service professional should start considering compliance options

# Retrofitting Safety

The recently passed Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act imposes, among other things, a Dec. 19 deadline for all drain covers (suction outlets) in public pools and spas to conform to ASME/ANSI A112.19.8-2007 performance standards.

The Act's provisions apply to drain covers in all public pools, not merely new pools. Therefore, as the deadline approaches, public pool owners, as well as pool and spa professionals, will have to evaluate their pool and spa drains for compliance.

Owners/operators will have to inspect and verify that each and every drain cover is compliant and in good condition.

## Check for compliance

First, evaluate the make and condition of each drain cover. If a compliant drain cover (suction outlet) has been tested and meets the requirements set by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the American National Standards Institute, it will be embossed with the ASME/ANSI standard number A112.19.8-2007.

Some compliant drain cover configurations are available today through distribution; additional configurations

will be available prior to the federal deadline.

When checking drains for compliance, service personnel must either inspect the cover themselves or employ a certified diver. Draining the pool should not be necessary (and it's likely more expensive than hiring a diver).

Over time, drain covers can deteriorate or break, threatening the safety of pool and spa users. Covers should be checked at the beginning of each season and as part of regular pool maintenance.

In addition to the ASME/ANSI markings, service personnel should look for openings, loose or missing screws, rusted parts or cracks of any kind. If the cover is found to be noncompliant or in poor condition, it must be replaced. If the screws are rusted or loose, they need to be replaced with the appropriate stainless steel screws. Manufacturers of drain covers provide the proper screw selections for replacement covers.

When installing a new drain cover, you'll notice that

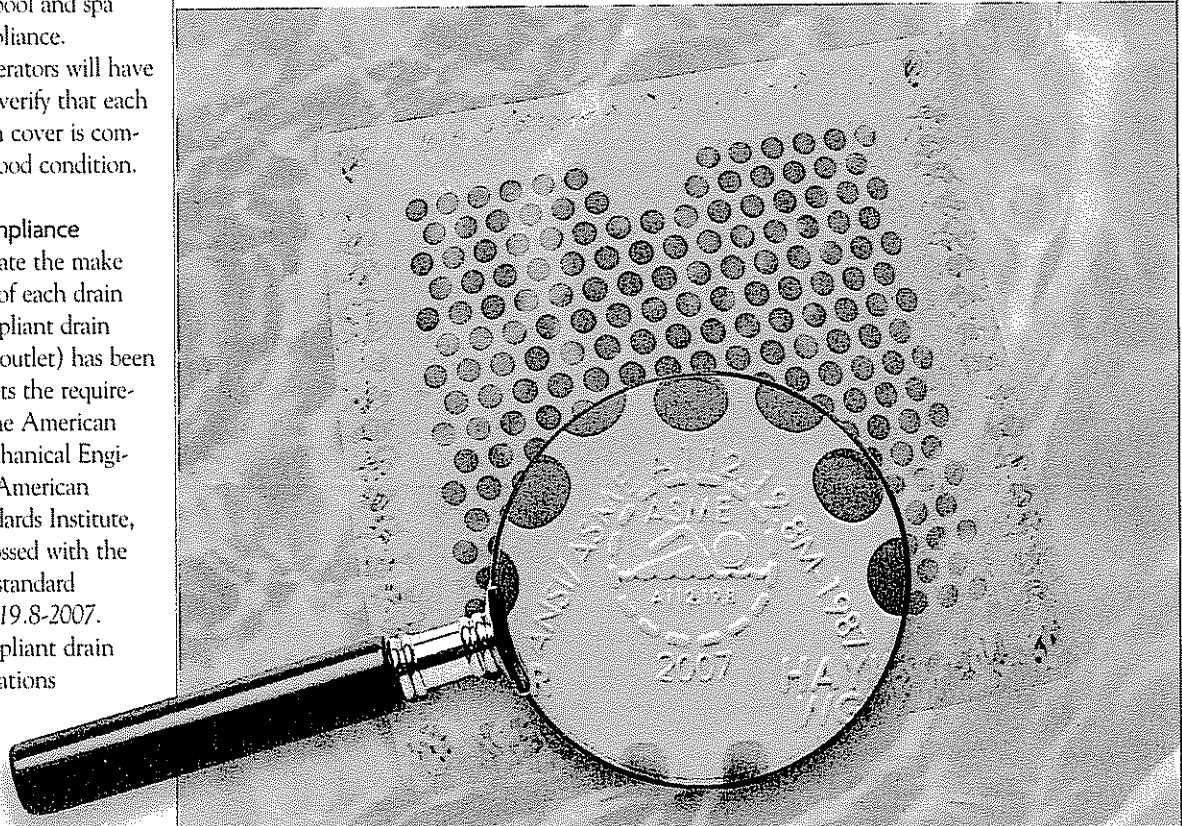
some larger models require additional parts and labor. However, this typically just involves multiple mounting frames and screws to achieve proper installation.

## Devices and systems

Still, simply having a compliant drain cover should not be the only layer of protection.

Many public pool facilities come equipped with multiple pumps and drain systems to drive adjacent pools, spas, wading pools and diving pools.

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Drain check: As of Dec. 19, all drain covers produced and sold in the United States must meet ASME/ANSI standards. For commercial pools, existing noncompliant covers will have to be replaced.

The new federal requirements also state that public pools and spas with single main drains (other than unblockable drains) must be equipped with at least one compliant anti-entrapment device or system.

A residential pool owner with a single main drain also should consider this anti-entrapment device or system.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission has identified several recommended anti-entrapment devices or systems that must accompany public pools and spas with only a single main drain.

**1** Safety vacuum release system. An SVRS ceases operation of the pump, reverses the circulation flow or provides a vacuum release at a suction outlet when a blockage is detected. SVRS must be tested by an independent third party and conform to ASME/ANSI standard A112.19.17 or ASTM standard F2387. These products are designed and manufactured for easy installation on new or existing installations.

**2** Suction-limiting vent system. This system, also called an atmospheric vent,

introduces air into the suction line, thus causing the pump to lose prime and reduce the suction force at the main drain in the event of a suction line blockage. Generally installed at time of construction, the correct design and construction of the suction limiting vent system should be certified by a design professional and inspected by a licensed inspector.

**3** Gravity drainage system. This device, also referred to as a reservoir, surge tank or surge pit, uses a collector tank with a separate water storage vessel from which the pump draws water. Water moves from the pool to the tank due to atmospheric pressure, limiting drain suction forces. Typical in Florida and commonly used for skim gutters, gravity drainage systems most often are installed at time of construction.

**4** Automatic pump shut-off system. A device that senses a drain blockage and shuts off the pump system. Some SVRS devices may meet this definition.

**5** Drain disablement. The CPSC is unaware of any product currently available as a drain disablement system. If the circulation system is designed to work effectively without the main drain(s), you can fill the sump with concrete or permanently disable the suction line from the drain to the pump.

While any of the above may work, significant downtime and a costly reconstruction of the plumbing and/or pool is required for some options. As it stands, the quickest and most cost-effective way to retrofit your pool may be to use an SVRS. Most can be installed and activated in one to three hours by a trained installer. [Editor's note: There is also the option for builders to construct, or install, a drainless pool.]

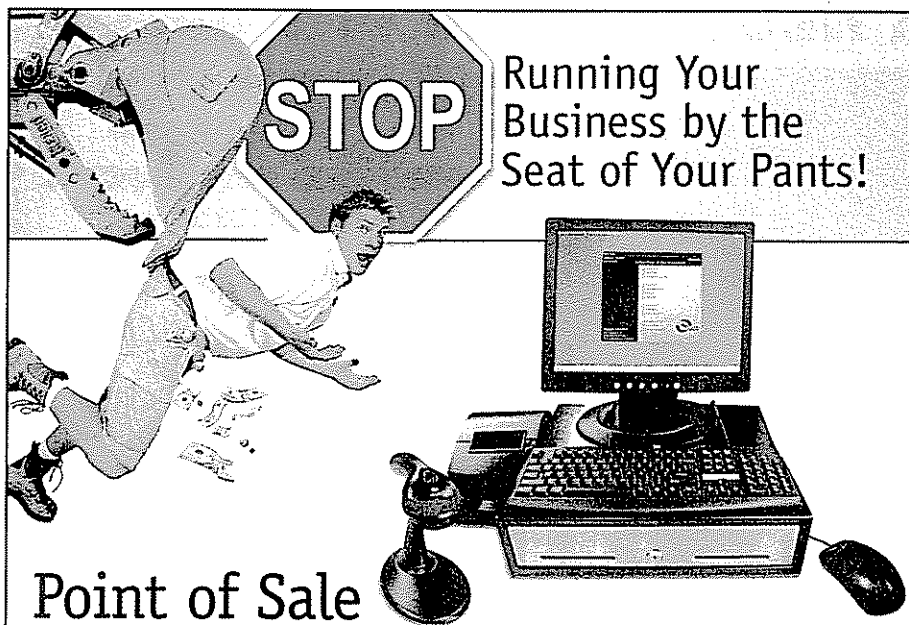
**Time to act**

An estimated 320,000 public pool facilities may require retrofits with additional layers of protection. Public pools in use must comply with Section 1404 of the federal Pool and Spa Safety Act by the December deadline if they wish to remain open.

In addition, the law imposes criminal and civil penalties for noncompliance, including fines up to \$1.8 million and/or imprisonment.

At press time, little more than three months remained for pool operators to begin inspections that will determine the best retrofit option for their pools or spas.

The time to act is now. ■



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