

DROWNING PREVENTION

Managing Hospitality Risk



WHAT'S AT RISK?

One of the many pleasures of staying at a hotel or resort is taking full advantage of the swimming pool. Drowning remains the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death of children under 14. Drowning usually occurs quickly and silently. Childhood drowning and near-drowning can happen in a matter of seconds and typically occurs when a child is left unattended or during a brief lapse in supervision.

Two minutes following submersion, a child will lose consciousness. Irreversible brain damage occurs after four to six minutes and determines the immediate and long-term survival of a child. The majority of children who survive are discovered within two minutes after submersion (92%), and most children who die are found after 10 minutes (86%). Nearly all who require cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) die or are left with severe brain injury. Typical medical costs for a near-drowning victim can range from \$75,000 for initial emergency room treatment to \$250,000 a year for longterm care. The cost of a near drowning that results in brain damage can be more than \$5.5 million.

WHAT ARE YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS?

When it comes to swimming pool safety, you have very definite responsibilities under both civil and common law. State and Local code and regulations will dictate such factors as pool construction, water supply, ladders, decks, diving areas, disinfectant, chemical feeders, lighting, ventilation and many safety features. Beyond applicable codes, do everything reasonable to provide a

safe swimming environment. In the aftermath of a serious pool injury, a plaintiff attorney will hire pool safety experts to look at every aspect of your pool operation.

Because most hotels do not provide lifeguards, your pool must be secured, properly constructed, maintained, marked and signed, and provided with every modern safety feature. Water clarity is particularly important. It's hard to believe, but it is not uncommon for drowning victims to go unnoticed for minutes, even hours, when murky water obscures them at the bottom of a pool. Documenting that your pool is maintained daily by a Certified Pool Operator is a crucial safeguard against serious liability.

HOW CAN YOU BETTER PROTECT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

For some suggestions designed to assist you in developing sound policies and procedures for your organization, please turn this document over and review the attached checklist.

For more information about this and other hospitality risk management topics, please contact:

National Specialty Underwriters, Inc.
10900 NE 4th Street
Suite 1100
Bellevue, WA 98004
(425) 450-1090
www.nsui.com



Checklist: Drowning Prevention

- Make sure the on-site pool operator is certified.
- Review daily inspections and make any corrective actions immediately. Document this information in a daily pool log or journal.
- Test water daily for chlorine residual and pH and maintain records.
- Maintain proper pH levels within the range of 7.2 to 7.8 pH.
- Maintain proper sanitation residuals: No less than 1.0 ppm free chlorine for pools and 1.5 ppm for spas.
- Maintain water clarity such that a black disc six inches in diameter is readily visible when placed on a white field at the deepest point in the pool.
- Make sure the pool water filtration and disinfection systems are on a scheduled preventive maintenance program.
- Make sure the pool is enclosed or fenced and has self-closing doors or self-locking gates.
- If lifeguards are not on duty, make sure this is clearly posted in several areas, and ensure that someone on premises is qualified to administer CPR and other emergency procedures.
- Warning signs should include the following:
 - Safety and sanitation
 - No lifeguard
 - Parental supervision
 - 911
 - Location of telephone
 - Pool capacity
- Ask employees to monitor the pool area, even after hours.
- Instruct employees to document whenever they enforce a pool rule.
- Ask employees to prohibit alcohol-impaired guests from entering the pool.
- Do not allow any horseplay.
- Make sure an employee trained in emergency first aid is on duty when the pool is open.
- Check all safety equipment.
- Mark lifesaving equipment “For Emergency Use Only.” The equipment should include:
 - A ring buoy attached to a rope 1½ times the width of the pool but not over 60 feet
 - A shepherd’s crook at least 12 feet long
 - A rescue tube
- Clearly mark the division between shallow and deep water with ropes or floats and with contrasting coloring on the pool floor.
- Provide a pool telephone with clearly posted emergency numbers.
- Make sure the pool is adequately lit (including emergency lighting) and the underwater lights work. If night swimming is allowed, the pool basin and surrounding deck areas should be illuminated.
- Familiarize your staff with the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act. Follow all federal, state, and local requirements for suction entrapment avoidance through use of approved drain systems and safety drain covers.