

Pool fencing requirements



Inadequate pool fencing continues to be a major contributing factor in the rate of drowning among children under 5 years of age.

Please be aware that pool fencing legislation is different in all the states and territories within Australia and the information on this page relates to NSW only.

Pool fencing laws

The requirements for child-resistant barriers vary depending on when the pool was built and where the pool is located.

For pools built before 1 August 1990

Access to the pool from the house must be restricted at all times. Windows and doors may form part of the barrier, but they must be compliant.

For pools built after 1 August 1990 but before 1 July 2010

The pool must be surrounded by a fence that separates the pool from the house. Some exemptions apply to pools on very small properties (less than 230 square metres), large properties (2 hectares or over) and those on waterfront properties.

For pools built after 1 July 2010

All new pools must be surrounded by a fence that separates the pool from the house.

Inflatable pools

Owners of premises with swimming pools, including inflatable swimming pools, must ensure their pools comply with fencing laws.

Protect Your Pool, Protect Your Kids video

The Children's Hospital, Westmead, commissioned a comprehensive video covering a range of pool safety topics. All pool owners are encouraged to take a few minutes to watch the video and implement its safety messages and techniques.

The video is located under 'Drowning Prevention' on the 'Swimming Pool Fencing' page of The Children's Hospital at Westmead website (www.kidshealth.chw.edu.au/projects).

Physical measurements

Pool fencing must comply with the physical measurement requirements summarised below:

- height of a pool fence must be at least 1.2m above the ground from finished ground level
- gap at the bottom of the pool fence must not be more than 10cm from finished ground level
- gaps between any vertical bars in the fence must not be more than 10cm
- to prevent children climbing over pool fences any horizontal climbable bars on the fence must be at least 90cm apart from each other.

Also see the information below detailing the 'non climbable zone' requirements.

If your pool fencing does not satisfy all the above measurement requirements, contact a licensed builder, pool technician or fencing contractor straight away.

Non-climbable zone

Trees, shrubs or any other objects such as a barbeque, pot plants, toys, ladders and chairs must not be within the 90cm 'non climbable zone'. This is so that a child can not use them to climb over the fence.

The 'non climbable zone' is a zone measured in an arc shape from the top of the outside of the pool fence arching towards the ground.

Any part of the boundary fence that is part of the pool fence or is within the 90cm 'non climbable zone' must not have any horizontal bars. If this needs rectification, contact a licensed builder, pool technician or fencing contractor to provide you with a compliant solution.

Child-resistant doors and windows

Some older swimming pools might include doors or windows as part of the pool fence or barrier. This is no longer allowed in the building of new pools.

Doors in pool barriers

If you have a door that forms part of a pool barrier you must make sure that:

- it self closes
- it self latches
- the latching device is at least 150cm off the ground
- there are no footholds wider than 1cm on the door or its frame between the floor and 100cm above the floor
- it does not have any pet doors.

If all of the above are not satisfied, you will need to take the necessary action to ensure that any door that is part of a pool barrier complies with these requirements.

Windows in pool barriers

If you have windows that form part of a pool barrier, they must have a locking device or a security screen that prevents them from opening more than 10cm.

If it does not satisfy this requirement, you will need to install a locking device or security screen that reduces the gap to 10cm or less. Locking devices and security screens can be purchased from your local hardware store, but you should also seek advice from your local council, accredited private certifier or licensed builder.

Gate closing and latching devices

Check to ensure that your pool gate:

- is never propped open and is always kept shut
- swings outwards (away from the pool area). If it does not swing outwards, the gate must be re-hung so that it does.
- shuts automatically from any open position, without having to forcibly close it.
- automatically locks (self-latches) when it closes.

If the gate does not shut and lock automatically, the pool gate should be permanently fastened until a new lock and closing device can be installed. Self-closing and self-latching devices can be purchased from most pool and hardware shops and can be easily installed.

Pool fence and gate maintenance

All fence bolts, screws and fasteners must be tight and in good order. Any loose bolts, screws and fasteners should be tightened or replaced.

Self-closing gate hinges, locks and latches should be sprayed with lubricating oil or silicone.

Manufacturers of the pool fence and gate should provide written instructions on how to maintain your pool fence and gate. This may include the regular replacement of springs and regular spraying of self closing gate hinges, locks and latches with lubricating oil or silicone.

Proper maintenance can help to prevent many of the faults relating to self closing and self latching gates.