



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH County of Riverside

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN NO. 29-07

DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION

GUIDELINES FOR POOL COVERS AT PUBLIC SWIMMING, SPA AND WADING POOLS

This document describes the various types of pool covers which are currently available and offers safety standards as to their use on public pools. For the purpose of these guidelines, the term pool refers to swimming pools, spa pools, and wading pools.

There are basically two types of pool covers: safety pool covers and floating pool covers.

- **Safety covers** are designed primarily as a physical barrier to prevent children from falling into the pool water. As an indirect benefit, safety covers often help keep the pool water warm, free of debris, and reduce water loss.
- **Floating covers** are designed to float on top of the water without anchoring or securing to the pool. Floating covers are **NOT** safety covers. Floating covers are designed primarily to heat the pool water utilizing solar energy.

*The following is a description of pool covers and recommendations as to their acceptability.

TYPES OF POOL COVERS AND GUIDELINES FOR THEIR USE

FLOATING POOL COVERS

Floating pool covers are made of plastic sheets with air bubbles throughout often referred to as "bubble covers". Floating pool covers have inherent safety risks as they give the appearance that they can be walked on, especially to the eyes of a small child. They are normally not securely attached to the pool or deck. Floating covers can collapse under the weight of a child and could result in suffocation and/or drowning. Tests have shown that floating pool covers will return to their original position within 10 to 20 seconds after a person has fallen underneath them, thereby concealing a potential drowning victim. In addition, pool users have been known to partially fold back the floating cover and swim in the uncovered pool section. People can become disoriented and accidentally swim under the covered section, becoming trapped underneath. For safety reasons floating covers are only allowed when ALL of the following criteria are met:

1. Prior to installation, contact the Department of Environmental Health for evaluation of the pool site and proposed pool cover.
2. To be considered, the pool must be segregated from all dwelling units by an approved fence or other approved enclosure. Floating pool covers will not be accepted at any courtyard pools or in other situations where there is no fence or enclosure between the dwelling units and the pool.
3. The pool and pool enclosure must be under the supervision of management personnel or other responsible person(s) who have exclusive access to the pool area when it is not open for use. The pool enclosure must be locked to prevent any usage of the pool when the cover is in place. An emergency egress shall be accessible at all times even when the pool is not open for use. Pools may not be reopened or used until responsible personnel remove and properly store all pool covers.

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4. The pool cover, when not in use, must be completely removed, rolled up, and properly stored at least four feet from the pool edge. In the case of spa pools, the cover should be physically removed from the pool area to prevent users from re-covering the spa pool.

SAFETY POOL COVERS

1. General Requirements for Safety Covers:

- a. Pool covers must be installed in compliance with all applicable sections of the California Pool Code and all other applicable Building and Safety codes.
- b. Prior to installation all safety covers must be approved by the Environmental Health Department, and plans may need to be submitted.
- c. All safety covers must meet current American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM Standard F-1346) specifications. The ASTM labeling must be visible on the cover.
- d. The pool must be under the supervision of qualified management and/or responsible person(s) who have exclusive access to the pool area when it is not open. Management or responsible parties must properly remove and store any cover prior to pool opening.
- e. Safety covers must be installed and used per manufacture's specifications.
- f. When not in place on the pool, all covers, reel systems, and similar appurtenances, must be properly stored a minimum 4 feet away from the pool edge and/or completely removed from the deck area as determined by this Department.

2. Additional Requirements for Specific Types of Safety Covers

a. On Deck Unit with Surface Mounted Deck Track

1. All retracting mechanisms and their associate housing must be located a minimum 4 feet away from the pool edge.
2. Tracks located on the deck surface must be designed not exceeding a height of 5/8 inch and shall not be a tripping hazard. Tracking must be installed far enough away from the coping so as not to interfere with handhold of the coping.
3. The track cannot interfere with deck surface drainage.
4. The activating switch must be installed so that the operator has a clear view of the entire pool surface.
5. The activating switch must be a "dead man" type where the person operating the switch must hold the control switch the entire time the cover is running and stop when released.
6. Provisions must be made to ensure that only responsible parties (Owner/Operator) have access to the cover mechanism.

b. Sub Surface Unit with Under Coping Track

1. The cover must completely retract into the housing unit.
2. When the cover is retracted the housing cover and track must be completely flush with the pool deck and form a handhold that extends 1 to 2 inches over the edge of the pool and not exceed 2 and 1/2 inches in total thickness.
3. The activating switch must be installed so the operator has a clear view of the entire pool surface.

4. The activating switch must be a “dead man” type where the person operating the switch must hold the control switch the entire time the cover is running and stop when released.
5. Provisions must be made to ensure that only responsible parties (Owner/Operator) have access to the cover mechanism.

c. Canopy Type

1. Columns and all support mechanisms for the canopy must be located at least 4 feet back from the pool edge when the cover is retracted.
2. The activating switch must be installed so that the operator has a clear view of the entire pool surface.
3. The activating switch must be a “dead man” type where the person operating the switch must hold the control switch the entire time the cover is running and stop when released.
4. Provisions must be made to ensure that only responsible parties (Owner/Operator) have access to the cover mechanism.

d. Stretch Covers

1. Tie down anchors must be designed so that they are fully recessed into the deck and not a tripping hazard.
2. The pool must be under the control of responsible personnel with sole access to the pool area when not in use. Responsible parties must properly remove and store the pool cover prior to pool opening.

If at any time a representative from this Department observes any pool cover being used in an unsafe manner it may be ordered removed from the pool or the pool may be ordered closed.

*Document available in an alternate format upon request.

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