

SWIMMING POOLS

Swimming pools can provide a place for enjoyment and exercise, but they can also pose a serious danger if precautions are not taken when they are left unattended or unsecured. Each year the news relates stories about swimming pool drowning and injuries. This article may help to lessen the number of those stories.

The State Building Code defines a **Swimming Pool** as:

“Any structure intended for swimming or recreational bathing that contains water over 24 inches in depth. This includes in-ground, above ground and on-ground swimming pools, hot tubs and spas”.

All swimming pools require the issuance of a building permit prior to installation, construction and/or use.

Some building code safety requirements for swimming pools are identified below. Please reference Section 3109 of the base code and Appendix G of the Single and Two-Family Dwelling Code for further provisions. Also, please remember that Massachusetts General Law establishes additional requirements for public and semi-public swimming pools and that Massachusetts has amended certain provisions of the IBC and IRC (Appendix G) relating to swimming pool safety.

A plot plan is required. The location of the swimming pool and septic system must be shown.

In general:

- Swimming pools shall be provided with a barrier at least 48 inches above grade. Either a permanent wall or fence is considered a barrier and there are restrictions on the climb ability of fence and wall barriers.
- The barrier shall be at grade or in the case of some above ground pools, mounted on top of the pool structure. The wall of the above ground pool can serve as the barrier if it is a minimum of 48” from grade to top of pool wall.
- For above ground pools that are 48 inches in height and are accessed via a ladder and/or stairs, the stairs and/or ladder shall be removable and/or retractable. Where fixed stairs/ladders are used, the stairs/ladders shall be protected by a barrier.
- When an access gate is installed within a barrier, the access gate shall be self-closing and self-latching. Additionally, the gate shall open outward away from the swimming pool. The latch release must be 54 inches above grade.
- Where a wall of a dwelling is used as a barrier and there is direct access from the dwelling to the swimming pool, at least one of the following options shall be used:
 - *The pool shall be provided with a power safety cover.
 - *All doors with direct access through that wall shall be provided with an audible warning alarm.
 - or
 - *Other means of protection affording the same degree of pool barrier protection that is approved by the building official may be utilized.
- Convenient portable inflatable swimming pools that contain water over 24 inches are required to meet the same requirements as permanent swimming pools.

Reduce the risk of electrical shock

- Electrical work is required to conform to the MA Electrical Code (527 CMR 12.00).
- As a safety rule of thumb, do not run extension cords to provide power for filtration and lighting in or around the swimming pool.

It is good practice to post swimming pool use safety rules in and around the pool area; be sure that your family and guests are aware of the rules and enforce them rigorously. Always be cautious when young children have access to a pool. Make certain that children understand the dangers and the rules that have been developed to help keep them safe. Never let young children use a pool without adult supervision and be sure to follow all code safety requirements when installing/constructing a swimming pool.

