



# Risk Management

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## A quick refresher on swimming pool law and requirements for hotels

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*®, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! \*\*\*Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.\*\*\* College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

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As the weather starts to warm up and many people start to make travel plans for Summer vacations, most hotels are beginning to open their outdoor swimming pools for the season. In the past two years many states have enacted legislation that affects commercial pool operators, including hotels. Such changes in pool regulations are intended to make these recreation facilities safer for users and to hold operators more accountable for violations or injuries to guests.



### Certified Pool/Spa Operator

One such piece of recent legislation in many states is the requirement that there should be a trained and certified pool/spa operator (CPO) at each facility. The National Swimming Pool Foundation® (NSPF®) offers CPO® certification courses that are designed to provide individuals with the basic knowledge, techniques, and skills of pool and spa operations.

According to the NSPF®, the Certified Pool/Spa Operator® certification program has delivered more training than any other program in the pool and spa industry since 1972, resulting in more than 240,000 successful CPO® certifications in 44 countries. The CPO® certification program is widely accepted by local and state authorities including most Health departments, and the certification is recognized nationally and internationally.

The CPO® certification program is generally taken as a two-day class that covers 14-16 hours of information from the NSPF® Pool & Spa Operator™ Handbook and local codes taught by an NSPF® instructor. Material covered includes pool and spa chemistry, testing, treatment, filtration, maintenance, automatic feeding equipment, and government requirements. The classroom environment affords students direct interaction with the instructor and fellow students. Students are required to pass an open book exam in order to earn the CPO® certification, which is valid for five years.

### Virginia Graeme Baker Act

As previously presented in *The Rooms Chronicle*®, the federal government signed into legislation the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act. The Act was named after the granddaughter of former Secretary of State James Baker III; she died in a tragic incident in June 2002 when the suction from a spa drain entrapped her under the water. The Act is intended to prevent the tragic and hidden hazard of drain entrapments and eviscerations in pools and spas.

The Act specifies that after December 19, 2008, swimming pool and spa drain covers available for purchase in the United States must meet specific performance requirements. Additionally, public swimming pools, wading pools, spas and hot tubs must meet requirements for installation of compliant drain covers. New drain covers which meet the current standard are now beginning to make their way into the marketplace. Additionally, in certain instances, public pools and spas must have additional devices or systems

### Hot tip

Federal and state governmental regulations for swimming pools at commercial venues can be accessed through the National Swimming Pool Foundation® website at:

[http://nspf.org/Codes\\_Links.html](http://nspf.org/Codes_Links.html)

designed to prevent suction entrapment. Full details of the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act can be found online at: [www.poolsafety.gov/vgb.html](http://www.poolsafety.gov/vgb.html).

### 15 Additional standards for pool safety

Presented below are 15 additional standards to promote pool and spa safety for a hotel environment. These standards are recommended by the National Swimming Pool Foundation® and are derived from the NSPF's "Pool and Spa Operator™ Handbook".

- Third-party service companies and outside service technicians should have a current Certified Pool Operator certification. Certification is three years.
- Ensure that self-closing, self-latching gates are properly operational, and that required fencing is intact and in place (minimum 48" high). Openings in fence barriers should not allow passage of a 4" diameter disc.
- Pool decks should have a minimum of a four-foot clearance around the pool or spa on all sides.
- Depth markings should be intact, easily visible, and in proper locations.
- Handrails, grab rails and ladders must be properly secured.
- The hotel's pool/spa rules should be clearly posted in the mandatory locations.
- Sanitary facilities must have appropriate supplies and be properly maintained.
- There must be an approved test kit at the pool site capable of testing chlorine, or bromine, pH, calcium hardness, and total alkalinity. If necessary, other testing capability should be available, such as Cyanuric Acid, salt tests, and tests for metals such as copper.
- Free available chlorine levels should not fall below 1ppm (mg/L). Ideal levels in pools range from 2-4 ppm (mg/L) and in spas from 3-5ppm (mg/L). Total bromine should fall between 4-6 ppm (mg/L) for pools and spas. The maximum level of chlorine should not exceed 4ppm (mg/L) [10 ppm (mg/L) for bromine] unless allowed by code.
- The pH level for the water should be between 7.2-7.8.
- The water circulation/filtration system should be operating and circulating water at the proper rate.
- Pool/Spa main drains must be visible, properly attached, and fully intact.
- Pools and spas with single drains must have an additional level of protection against entrapment (see Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act).
- Water temperature should not exceed 104° F in spas/hot tubs (40° C).
- Each pool and spa must have a shepherd's hook and ring buoy that is easily accessible to a first-responder. Access to these life-saving devices must not be impeded by locking mechanism or blocked by furniture or decorations.

The above list is only meant to be a representative sample of standards. The pool operator should be fully aware of the specific regulatory requirements for his or her facility and geographic locale. ✧

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