

Guidelines for Use of Pool Covers on Public Swimming Pools, Spas and Wading Pools

This document describes the various types of pool covers which are currently available and offers safety standards for their use on public pools. For the purpose of these guidelines, the term pool refers to swimming pools, spas, 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 evaporation.
- **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 pool operator should also be advised to check with their local building official for any additional requirements related to pool covers prior to use.

Floating Pool Covers - Floating pool covers are **not** safety covers.

For safety reasons floating covers are only allowed when **ALL** of the following criteria are met:

1. Prior to installation, contact Environmental Health for an evaluation of the pool site and proposed pool cover.
2. The pool must be segregated from all dwelling units by an approved fence or enclosure. Floating pool covers are not permitted where there is no fence or enclosure between the living units and the pool.
3. The pool must be under the supervision of management personnel or other responsible person(s) who has sole access to the pool area when it is not open for use. The pool area must be locked to prevent any usage of the pool when the cover is in place.
4. The pool cover must be completely removed when not in use, rolled up, and stored at least four feet away from the pool. Spa covers must be physically removed from the immediate premises to prevent bathers from re-covering the spa. When there is more than one pool in an enclosure, all floating pool covers must be removed prior to opening the pool enclosure to the public.

Safety Pool Covers - General Requirements:

1. Pool covers must be installed in compliance with all applicable sections of the California Pool Code and all other applicable Building and Safety codes.
2. Prior to installation all safety covers must be approved by Environmental Health. Plans may need to be submitted.
3. The pool cover must meet current American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) requirements for safety covers.
4. The cover must be installed and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
5. Provisions must be made for the stair handrail and deep-end ladder so that they do not impact the integrity of the cover when it is in place.

Additional requirements for specific types of safety covers:

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 supervision of management personnel or other responsible person(s) who has sole access to the pool area when it is not open for use. The responsible party must remove and store the pool cover before opening the pool for use.

On Deck Unit with on Deck Track

1. All retracting mechanisms and their associated housing must be located a minimum of 4 feet away from the pool edge.
2. Tracks located on the deck surface must be designed to be trip-resistant and not exceed a height of 5/8 inch. The track must be of contrasting color to the deck surface. The track must be installed far enough away from the coping so as not to interfere with the handhold of the coping. Screws used to secure the track to the deck must be countersunk.
3. The activating switch must be installed so that the operator has a clear view of the entire pool surface.
4. The activating switch must be a "dead man" type switch where the cover will stop once the key is released.
5. The mechanism must be designed so that the cover will return to the open position if it encounters an obstruction while closing.
6. Provisions must be made to ensure that only responsible parties have keys to operate the pool cover mechanism. Children should not be allowed to operate the pool cover mechanism.

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 must be completely flush with the pool deck and form a handhold which extends 1 to 2 inches over the edge of the pool and does not exceed 2½ inches in thickness.
3. The track located under the coping must be designed and installed so that the total thickness of the coping does not exceed 2½ inches.
4. The sub-surface housing compartment must drain to an approved disposal system through an air gap. It must not be directly connected to any sewer or deck drain system.
5. The activating switch must be installed so that the operator has a clear view of the entire pool surface.
6. The activating switch must be a "dead man" type switch where the cover will stop once the key is released.
7. The mechanism must be designed so that the cover will return to the open position if it encounters an obstruction while closing.
8. Provisions must be made to ensure that only responsible parties have keys to operate the pool cover mechanism.

Children should not be allowed to operate the pool cover mechanism.

Canopy Type

Columns and all supporting mechanisms for the canopy must be located at least 4 feet back from the pool edge when the cover is retracted.

1. The activating switch must be installed so that the operator has a clear view of the entire pool surface.
2. The activating switch must be a "dead man" type switch where the cover will stop once the key is released.
3. The mechanism must be designed so that the cover will return to the open position if it encounters an obstruction while closing.
4. Provisions must be made to ensure that only responsible parties have keys to operate the pool cover mechanism.

Children should not be allowed to operate the pool cover mechanism.

Imperial County Public Health Department, Environmental Health Division
1221 W. State Street, Suite B, El Centro CA 92243
Phone: (442) 265-1888 Fax: (442) 265-1903
www.icphd.org