



## DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING INSPECTION

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### SWIMMING POOL AND SPA - CODES AND PERMITS

#### **Applicable Codes:**

Construction requirements for residential swimming pools and spas are contained in the Virginia Residential Code. Chapter 42 covers the electrical equipment and wiring. The International Swimming Pool and Spa Code addresses the safety barrier and pools installed in other than R-5 occupancies.

#### **Electrical:**

To ensure proper installation of the equipment and the correct bonding and grounding methods, it is highly recommended that the electrical work be done by a licensed electrical contractor familiar with pool electrical systems. An electrical permit is required when installing pool lighting, receptacles or power to pool equipment. All electrical requirements for swimming pools and spas shall be in accordance with NFPA 70 Article 680 and the Virginia Residential Code.

#### **Plumbing:**

To ensure that the plumbing system associated with pools are properly installed an inspection will be performed on the piping system associated with inground swimming pools for both commercial and residential applications. A permit is required for this work and can be applied for by either the licensed plumbing contractor or licensed pool contractor.

#### **Barrier:**

The function of the barrier around a pool or spa is to prevent accidental drowning of small children. The proper construction of the barrier ensures a safe method to keep small children from entering the pool area without adult supervision. The barrier consists of the fence, gates and sometimes doors to the dwelling. To ensure that the construction of the pool barrier is carried out by a responsible person, a separate building permit is required specifically for the barrier, if it is not installed by the same contractor listed on the pool permit. See an example of details on our website under Pool Barrier Drawings.

#### **Barrier Fence:**

Pool barrier fences may be constructed out of an assortment of materials. To help clarify the language contained in the code, descriptive illustrations have been provided. The top of the fence shall be at least 48 inches above the ground on the side away from the pool. Such height shall exist around the entire perimeter of the barrier for 3 feet measured horizontally from the outside of the barrier. The fence shall not allow a 4-inch ball to pass through the pickets. The bottom of the fence to grade shall be no more than 2 inches at any point along the bottom of the fence material. The most important feature of the fence material is that it shall not be climbable.



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**Exception:** Where hot tubs and spas are equipped with lockable safety cover complying with ASTM F1346 and swimming pools are equipped with a powered safety cover complying with ASTM F1346, safety barrier fencing is not required.

### **Barrier gates:**

Pool fence gates shall be self-closing, self-latching and swing away from the pool enclosure. The latch shall be mounted at least 54 inches above the ground. If the latch is less than 54 inches above the ground, the latch shall be on the inside of the fence and there can be no openings in the gate or fence bigger than ½ inch within 18 inches of the latch.

### **House doors as part of the barrier:**

If the pool barrier fence utilizes the house (dwelling or accessory such as a pool house) as a portion of the barrier, then all doors opening into the pool enclosure shall be converted to operate like a barrier gate (self-closing, self-latching) with the door latch mounted 54 inches above the threshold or the doors shall be equipped with alarms listed and labeled as a water hazard alarm in accordance with UL 2017. The door alarms shall be automatic and loud enough to be heard throughout the house. They shall remain active unless an automated pool cover is installed.

### **Permits:**

Permits required include Commercial or Residential Swimming Pool, Pool Barrier, Pool Plumbing, and Electrical permits for construction of the pool or spa. Please note that a separate building permit for construction of the safety barrier is required if it is not installed by the same contractor listed on the pool permit. All pool houses, changing rooms, gazebos, pavilions and other related detached structures are required to have their own separate building and trade permits independent of the swimming pool or spa.

**Exception for Barrier Permits:** Above-ground pools where the pool wall is a minimum of 48 inches above the ground for the entire perimeter with a removable ladder only and spas with a safety cover meeting the criteria of ASTM F-1346. In this case, only the pool or spa building, and electrical permits are needed.

**Exception for Pool Permits:** Swimming pools with a surface area not greater than 150 square feet and are less than 24 inches deep do not require building permits.

### **Application Review:**

Pool and spa application documents must include a certified plat showing the proposed location of the pool on the plat along with setback measurements from property lines. Pool or spa structural drawings are also required. Barrier permit application documents must include a site plan showing the extent of the barrier and details on gates, fencing and door alarms if the house is part of the barrier.