

March 22, 2024

### Advisory Letter

The Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) is reminding all public pool owners and operators of the importance of complying with the federal Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act (VGB Act or VGBA), by maintaining compliant suction outlet covers to prevent entrapment and evisceration, which can cause serious injury or death.

Title 178 Chapter 2 005.11(H) requires that all public pool and spa main drains and suction outlets comply with ANSI A112.19.8-2008 or other standard approved under the federal VGB Act. The federal government adopted revised standard ANSI/APSP/ICC 16 2017 *Suction-Outlet Fitting Assemblies (SOFA) for Use in Pools, Spas, and Hot Tubs* as the successor standard under VGBA, effective May 24, 2021.

All VGBA compliant drain covers must be stamped with “Life \_\_ Years” indicating the manufacturer-determined service life of the product. Service life begins the month and year in which a SOFA component is installed, with or without water. These markings are permanent and visible after installation (ANSI/APSP/ICC-16 2017 Section 8.1.1).

A significant change in the 2017 standard is a requirement that all suction outlet covers must be packaged with a label with information including manufacturer’s name, cover/grate part number, service life, and certified flow rating (ANSI/APSP/ICC-16 2017 Section 8.4). It is the responsibility of the installer to fill in the remaining information: location of the installed SOFA, and installation date. This label must be posted as near as feasible to the pump control, and a copy of this information maintained by the pool owner. Drain covers manufactured before May 24, 2021 that comply with VGB 2008 may still be used, sold, and installed after this date, but must be installed according to manufacturer’s instructions. These products remain compliant until they expire, are damaged, or are improperly installed.

It is essential that SOFAs are installed according to manufacturer’s instructions, a requirement under Title 178 Chapter 2 003.02 and ANSI/APSP/ICC-16 2017 Section 3.6.1. Retain the manufacturer’s instructions after installing any pool equipment, as they include important maintenance information including instructions for repair/replacement of damaged fasteners.

We strongly urge that all pool operators perform inspections to ensure that compliant suction outlet covers and anti-entrapment devices are installed and functioning properly. Chemicals, UV light, and normal wear will break down the cover, fastening system, and other components, which may cause a potential entrapment hazard. **If a suction outlet cover becomes loose, cracked/damaged, or missing, close the pool or spa immediately. Do not allow patrons to access the pool until a VGBA-certified cover has been properly installed.**

Attached is a log template that may be used to record installation information for SOFAs at your facility (including drains, skimmer equalizer lines, and suction outlets for jets, slides, and play features). If your facility has multiple pumps, make a copy of the log for each pump. This information must be available for maintenance and inspection purposes.

The Swimming Pool Program website ([dee.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/SP](http://dee.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/SP)) has been updated with a list of Frequently Asked Questions regarding VGBA. If you have any additional questions, or if we can be of any assistance, please contact NDEE – Environmental Safety Section at: (402)471-2186, or by email at: [NDEE.EnvSafety@Nebraska.gov](mailto:NDEE.EnvSafety@Nebraska.gov).