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Pool Safety Prevails as ICC Adopts ANSI-7 Suction Entrapment Avoidance Standard

On September 21, the International Code Council (ICC) voted to replace the existing pool and spa entrapment avoidance language in the International Building Code (public pools and spas) and the International Residential Code (residential pool and spas) by adopting the ANSI/APSP-7 2006 Standard for Suction Entrapment Avoidance. Hundreds of code officials from all over the country listened to testimony and voted overwhelming to support these changes. As a result, the ANSI/APSP-7 standard will be incorporated into the body (mandatory section) of the 2009 International Building Code (IBC) and in Appendix G of the 2009 International Residential Code (IRC), both scheduled for publication by the ICC early in 2009.

This achievement validates the action taken by the Florida Building Commission (FBC) to adopt the ANSI/APSP-7 standard into the 2007 Florida Building Code, which goes into effect March 1, 2009. Before the ANSI/APSP-7 standard was adopted into the Florida code, FBC members and code officials worked for over two years analyzing the standard for its technical merit and its enforceability. Members of the Building Officials Association of Florida were on hand at the recent ICC hearings providing testimony and support of the ANSI/APSP-7 standard.

Dan Johnson, Swim Inc., member of Florida Swimming Pool Association and Association of Pool and Spa Professionals, said, "As a member of a very dedicated team of professionals who worked very hard for a very long time to achieve this goal, I am proud and honored to have been a part of it. My children's children will swim in safer pools because of what we have done."

In speaking with code officials from across the country, three major facts persuaded them to adopt the ANSI/APSP-7 standard into the IBC and IRC. First, the standard provides protection against all five known forms of entrapment with technically supported solutions. Second, it had already undergone a rigorous ANSI consensus approval process, the leading organization for the national consensus standards community. Third, the standard is completely consistent with the Federal Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act (VGB Act) and Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) interpretations of the VGB Act.

Jennifer Hatfield, FSPA Director of Government & Public Affairs, said, "This victory is a major step for pool and spa safety. Adoption of the standard into the IBC and IRC will provide states the means necessary to incorporate this new safety standard as Florida has done. The 2006 IBC and IRC language protected against some forms of entrapment SOME of the time, the adoption of the ANSI-7 standard will protect against all forms of entrapment ALL of the time."

The result of both the recent ICC action and 2007 FBC adoption of the ANSI/APSP-7 standard is a major improvement in pool and spa safety. The adoption of the standard strengthens the

IBC, IRC, and Florida Building Code to make them more stringent than existing codes. The IBC and IRC codes will now require covers that meet the new 2007 ASME/ANSI A112.19.8 drain cover standard, as required by the VGB Act. The 2007 ASME drain cover standard requires improved fastening to prevent covers from coming loose, improved resistance to degradation from ultraviolet light and prevention of hair entrapment (the leading cause of entrapment) and evisceration. The regulation of water velocity is also achieved by the adoption of ANSI/APSP-7; this is the most important protection against hair entrapment.

The standard provides that for new construction a contractor has the option of building a pool or spa with properly configured multiple suction outlets, an unblockable suction outlet or no suction outlet at all. These options are also recognized in the VGB Act. Finally, the standard requires that whenever a drain cover is broken or missing the pool or spa must be closed to bathers. Some forms of entrapment can occur even when the circulation pump is off, approved drain covers are the ONLY way to prevent all five forms of entrapment, as there is no such thing as a backup to a broken or missing cover. The importance of covers is also recognized in section 1404 of the VGB Act and the June 18 CPSC final staff interpretation on section 1404, both of which prohibit the operation of a public pool unless 2007 ASME approved drain covers are in place.

The 2006 IBC and IRC codes provided no protection against hair entrapment, evisceration or mechanical entrapment. The 2009 IBC and IRC, along with the 2007 Florida Building Code, are now designed to prevent ALL forms of entrapment, ALL of the time. This outcome was the result of a tremendous team effort by the work of the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals and the Florida Swimming Pool Association, leading advocates for pool and spa safety.

Many tireless industry volunteers and staff contributed to this result including: APSP Staff, Carvin DiGiovanni; APSP code consultant, Lorraine Ross; FSPA Staff, Jennifer Hatfield; chairman of the APSP Technical Committee, Steve Barnes; chairman of the APSP In-ground Residential Standard Committee and FSPA member, Dan Johnson; and APSP counsel, Steve Getzoff. Also testifying in support of the ANSI/APSP-7 standard were several state building code officials, including representatives from both Florida and Georgia, along with the Chief of the LA County Fire Department.

The Florida Swimming Pool Association will continue to work with contractors, building departments, and consumers to educate them about swimming pool safety. FSPA has developed training programs for code officials and industry professionals to help them learn how to implement the ANSI/APSP-7 standard. Classes are currently being taught throughout the state. In addition, consumer brochures are available that provide information about suction entrapment prevention and swimming pool safety. Training programs and informational brochures are available by contacting the Florida Swimming Pool Association at 866-930-FSPA.

About FSPA

The Florida Swimming Pool Association is a trade association for the pool and spa industry in Florida. Members are required to abide by a code of ethics and to be properly licensed and insured. FSPA provides the industry with access to continuing education courses, information on current trends and issues, an arbitration program and government relations representation. FSPA is governed by a Board of Directors.

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