

## **New Safety Law is Refreshing**

**By Reg P. Wydeven  
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When I was 12, my folks got our family a swimming pool. We swam in it every day, every summer, until we got rid of it when I was 22. We were lucky that the only injuries sustained during those 10 years were my sunburns.

Now my sister's family has a pool, and she generously lets our family swim all the time. We make our kids take swimming lessons – especially after my three-year-old accidentally fell in (he inherited his father's grace).

While fun, pools can also be very dangerous, especially if they have unsafe drain covers. Without proper covers, drains can cause a powerful suction effect which has caused hundreds of injuries and 50 drownings, over 30 of which were children, since the 1980s. Many experts believe the numbers could be much higher, since many police and medical records do not list the specific cause of drowning.

As a result, President Bush signed into law the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act in December of 2007. Under the new law, all swimming pool and spa drain covers available for purchase in the United States must utilize new drains that will prevent or lessen the chances of entrapment.

In addition, public pools will be required to be equipped with one of three approved drain covers or an entrapment prevention system accepted by the Consumer Products Safety Commission by December 19, 2008, or the next time the pool is open for public use.

District attorneys are also getting into the act. Last week, David Lionetti, a pool contractor in Connecticut, was arrested for manslaughter after six-year-old Zachary Cohn drowned last summer after becoming trapped by the suction of a drain in his family's pool in Greenwich, Conn.

Lionetti allegedly failed to install safety devices mandated by Connecticut building codes in the Cohn family pool. As a result, Zachary was unable to remove the cover and was caught in the suction power of the drain and drowned. It was the first arrest of a pool contractor for manslaughter in the U.S.

So if you have a pool, please check your drains so sunburns are your worst injury, too.