

POLICY NO: E - 003
POLICY: BACKYARD SWIMMING POOL AND SPA SAFETY BARRIERS
ORIGINAL POLICY: OCTOBER 1995
LAST REVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 2002
REVIEW DATE: CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

Coroners' investigations into toddler drownings have often found that parents or carers have contributed to the cause of death through their lack of provision of suitable isolation, separation or boundary fencing for backyard swimming pools and spas.

Safety barriers for private swimming pools and spas are compulsory in some States where they must meet Australian Standards and be properly maintained. Unfortunately, barriers are not always effective in preventing access to a swimming pool by young children. This can arise when the gate is left open, the fence is in disrepair or access is not restricted from the dwelling when only perimeter fencing exists.

2. POLICY

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia recommends to local government authorities and private swimming pool owners (including hotel/motel swimming pools) that all backyard swimming pools and spas be surrounded by isolation fencing that meets Australian Standard AS1926. Isolation fencing is recommended as it is more effective than separation and boundary (perimeter) fencing.

The Australian Standard requires gates to be self-closing and latches to be self-locking. If the fencing is to remain effective it must be maintained in good condition and the gate and lock must be maintained in good working order.

Gates should not be propped open for any reason and nothing should be left leaning against the fence which may assist a child to climb over.

Swimming pool and spa covers and disturbance alarms do not substitute for fencing.

Where fencing is inappropriate, ie around dams and creeks within a rural property, children should be provided with a large playing area surrounded by a fence that prevents them from gaining access to the body of water. The fence, gate and lock should conform to the same Australian Standard as specified for fencing surrounding swimming pools and spas.

Children must be constantly supervised in accordance with RLSSA Policy E002 whether or not the body of water is fenced.

3. REFERENCES

Carey, V., Preventing drowning in toddlers. *Injury Issues*, NSW Department of Health 1991; 2 July.