

## Dangerous pool drain covers

Posted: Nov 02, 2009 10:53 AM EST

You've seen the headlines. Children hurt, trapped, disemboweled, and even killed by pool drains.

In December 2008, the Virginia Graeme Baker Act took effect. It's named after a 7-year old girl killed by a pool drain. The act requires anti-entrapment, domed shaped drain covers instead of the old flat ones - which can be dangerous.

"Especially for older pools, pools on direct suction - hair can get caught a bathing suit can get caught. They [kids] can actually get sucked right to the drain," warned Jennifer Guttuso of the Collier County Health Department.

With the help of health inspectors, the NBC2 Investigators found pool drains across Southwest Florida not in compliance with the federal law. They included a pool at the Wyvern hotel in Punta Gorda, and 3 pools in Collier County; a condominium complex in Everglades City, a resort in Everglades City and the Rod and Gun Club.

According to health inspectors the pool at the Rod and Gun Club is the most dangerous kind because it has a flat grate and is a direct suction pool.

**Kara:** This pool has a grate that could potentially be dangerous to children?

**Guttuso:** Absolutely; without a doubt.

Starting November 20th, county health inspectors will have the power to shut down direct suction pools with out of date drain covers, including this one at the Rod and Gun Club. "We'll have to close it unless they change the grate," explained Guttuso.

We wanted to find out why the Rod and Gun Lodge is not in compliance, but a manager never returned our phone calls. We did catch up with George Sakadales, the Chief Engineer at the Wyvern Hotel in Punta Gorda.

**Kara:** Are you aware the drain you have is not in compliance with federal law?

**Sakadales:** Yes we're aware of it. The pool company told us they're still having trouble getting the drains.

We called the pool company. A worker there told us they have plenty in stock.

**Kara:** When is your hotel going to fix this problem?

**Sakadales:** I'll call the pool company today and find out where they stand on getting proper drains.

We checked back with the Wyvern Hotel. They have not changed their pool drain cover, telling us they're shopping around for the best price. The condo and resort owners in Everglades City tell us they are fixing their covers.

Inspectors say cost is the most common excuse they hear for not making the change. But contractors we talked with say most drains are only a few hundred dollars. Starting November 20th there will be no excuses. Health Departments will have the power to shut some of these pools down - to protect children from what's lurking down under.

The Virginia Graeme Baker Act does not apply to backyard pools, but many out there have the dangerous types of drains covers. If your cover is flat and fitted like the one on the left of this graphic, it's an old cover. You want something that looks like the one on the right - domed to prevent people from getting caught. Residential pools built after December 2008 should have these new, domed drain covers.

The NBC2 Investigators obtained the latest list of public and community pools in Lee and Charlotte counties which the health departments list as non-compliant with state law. That means the pool owners must update their drain covers. The only drain covers being sold now are VGB compliant. So when pool owners do the upgrade, their swimming facilities will be both state and federally compliant.

- [Lee County Health Department 'non-compliant' list](#)
- [Charlotte County Health Department 'non-compliant' list](#)

One note about this list: we're told there may be cases where the establishment has upgraded its drain covers but hasn't yet notified the health departments. There may also be situations where health departments haven't processed the paperwork yet.



(Image above: difference old and new drain cover)

To check, look for the certification stamp in this graphic. If your drain has it that means it's compliant with federal law.

