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# Barriers and covers to home pools and spas

The rules around child-protection barriers to home swimming pools and spa pools changed at the start of 2017, and the rules around automatic pool covers have now been clarified.

ON 1 JANUARY 2017, the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987 was repealed and pool barrier requirements moved into the Building Act.

## Residential pool provisions in Building Act

A new subpart in the Building Act, 7A – *Special provisions for residential pools*, has these key requirements:

- Every new and existing residential pool that can be filled with water 400 mm deep or more must have a Building Code-compliant barrier to restrict access by unsupervised children under 5 years.
- Spa pools must have a barrier to restrict access when the pool is not in use.
- Residential pools must be inspected for compliance at least once every 3 years. Spa pools complying with F9/AS2 do not need to be inspected.
- Territorial authorities can issue notices to fix and infringement notices.

## New Building Code clause F9

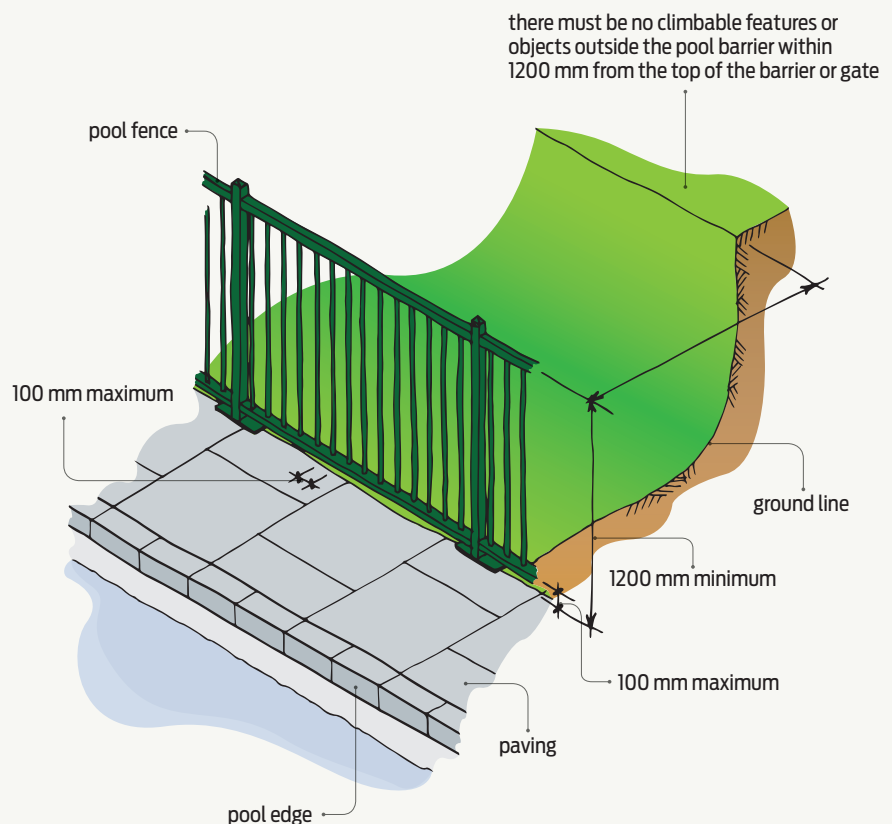
A new clause was added to the New Zealand Building Code, F9 *Means of restricting access to residential pools*, with two Acceptable Solutions:

- F9/AS1 *Residential pool barriers*.
- F9/AS2 *Covers for small heated pools* (spa pools).

## Quick overview of requirements

A pool barrier could be a fence or a wall. A building wall could form part of a barrier or all of the barrier if the pool is inside a building.

Barriers can enclose just the pool or all or part of the immediate pool area, including outdoor



**Figure 1** Children must not be able to climb an object to access the pool.

furniture, a barbeque and so on. The immediate pool area should not enclose things like children's everyday play equipment, a garage or clothes line.

There are specific requirements for signage on both swimming pool and spa pool barriers.

Swimming pool barriers require a building consent. Spa pool covers that comply with F9/AS2 do not require building consent.

MBIE determined (refer 2018/005) that automatic pool covers do not comply as barriers.

## F9/AS1 residential pool barriers

F9/AS1 sets out acceptable barriers, gates and doors used to reach a pool area.

With above-ground pools, the external pool wall can provide a complying barrier if it is ➤

1200 mm or more high and meets certain requirements given in F9/AS1 to ensure it is not easily climbed.

Some general requirements apply to all barriers and gates, including:

- there must be no gaps wider than 100 mm
- barriers must be vertical or within 15° of vertical – any barrier that leans must lean away from the pool
- there must be nothing outside a barrier that children could climb to reach the pool (Figure 1).

Pool barriers and gates must be:

- at least 1200 mm high from the ground/floor level outside the pool when not on a property boundary
- at least 1800 mm from the pool-side ground level when on a boundary and 1000 mm minimum horizontally from the pool waters edge (Figure 2).

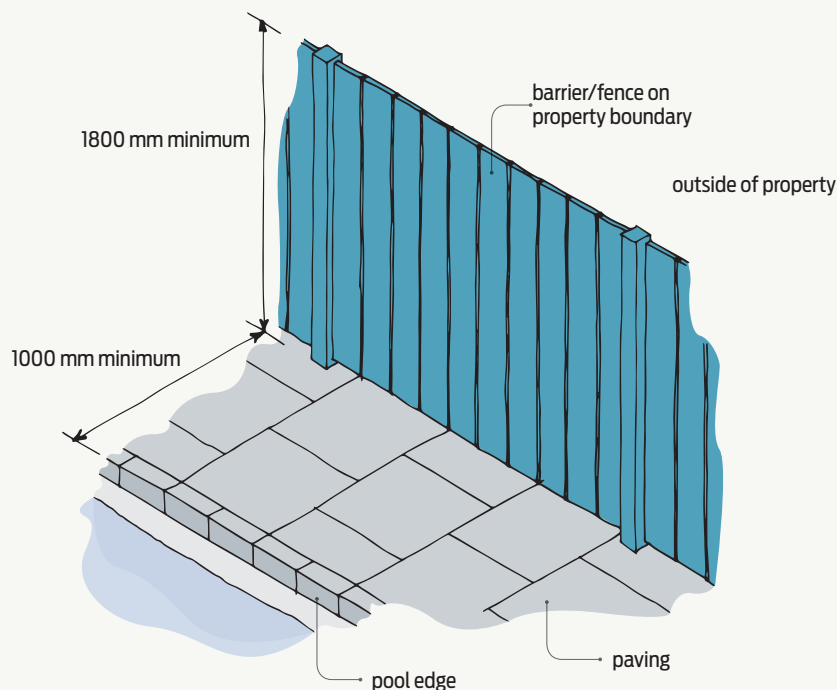
### Gates and latches

A pool barrier gate must be at least 1200 mm high, be hinged and open away from the pool clear of anything that may hold it open. It must:

- be self-closing so it closes and latches shut from any position without being pushed
- have hinges installed so that, even if the gate is pulled up or down, the latching device will stay closed and the gate will stay on its hinges.

Pool barrier latches must:

- be positioned where a small child outside the gate cannot reach
- secure the gate automatically when it is closed
- open only when physically released.



**Figure 2** Pool barrier requirements when the barrier is on a property boundary.

### Where a building wall is the pool barrier

Doors opening to the immediate pool area must be side-hinged or sliding single-leaf no wider than 1.0 m. There must be a self-latching device that is released manually, with the release at least 1.5 m above floor level, and this must automatically lock when the door closes. The doors must have either a self-closing device or a sound alarm.

With self-closing devices:

- where a hinged door opens towards the pool, the device must close the door so it latches from any position
- for other doors, the device must close the door so it latches when the door is 150 mm or more from the closed or latched position.

A door alarm must:

- sound within 7 seconds of the latch being opened
- produce a sound 75 dBA L10 from 3.0 m away
- automatically reset when the door is latched
- have a low-battery warning.

Alarms can have a deactivation switch to silence them for up to 15 seconds a minimum 1.5 m above the floor.

### F9/AS2 covers for spa pools

Spa pools with a water surface area of 5 m<sup>2</sup> or less and with the top at least 760 mm above the floor/ground level do not need fencing so long as they have a cover that complies with F9/AS2. The cover must:

- be closed with lockable straps a minimum 33 mm wide
- be able to support the weight of a small child and still securely cover the pool with no gaps of 100 mm or more opening.

There must be no objects or projections within 760 mm of the top of the pool that a small child could climb to access the spa pool. ◀

**For more** This is a brief overview. For the full details in Building Code clause F9, F9/AS1 and F9/AS2, see [www.building.govt.nz](http://www.building.govt.nz).