



# International Swimming Pool & Spa Code (ISPSC) FAQ

Revised 11/8/2021

- 1. What is the ISPSC?** The ISPSC is the first and only comprehensive model swimming pool and spa code available for states and localities to adopt. It is the only model code that addresses ALL (public and residential) types of pools and spas and covers ALL aspects of construction & design; including barriers, entrapment prevention, materials, finishes, dimensions and slopes, exits and entries, circulation, sanitization, signage and depth markers, and energy efficiency. It also covers ancillary components such as suction fittings, filters, pumps, motors, heaters, diving equipment, ladders and steps. It is part of the family of International Code Council (ICC) model codes and was developed jointly with the Pool and Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA), formerly the Association of Pool and Spa Professionals (APSP).
- 2. Why is the ISPSC needed?** There is no other Code or Standard that addresses all aspects of residential and public pool and spa construction & design. While most states and local jurisdictions have some form of existing public pool code, most lack a comprehensive code or law(s) that address the design, construction and safety of residential pools, which is often the cause of pool related injuries. Many jurisdictions lack even a barrier or suction-fitting requirement in residential pools. The ISPSC is a comprehensive and streamlined document that works together with the ICC family of codes.
- 3. How was the ISPSC developed?** The ISPSC was developed through the rigorous ICC Government Consensus Process, which requires full and fair consideration of all comments and submissions, first by a balanced panel of recognized experts,

and secondly, a final determination by the public servants who have hands on experience enforcing code provisions, and who comprise the ICC membership.

- 4. Are the ANSI approved PHTA/ICC standards included in the ISPSC?** Yes, the ISPSC is derived from and fully supported by the ANSI/PHTA/ICC national consensus standards, which have been developed under the rigorous due process requirements of the American National Standards Institute. This process ensures full and fair considerations of all comments and submissions, and final determination by a balanced panel of recognized experts, including representatives of public health departments, independent testing facilities, the National Safety Council and the US Consumer Product Safety Commission. The language of certain ANSI/PHTA/ICC Standards is mirrored in the ISPSC while other ANSI/PHTA/ICC Standards are referenced, as appropriate.
- 5. How does a State or Locality go about adopting the ISPSC?** Most states adopt building codes on a three-year cycle, with a state agency that oversees the adoption of such codes holding rulemaking hearings when reviewing new codes for consideration. A state can adopt a new code for mandatory use statewide, or it can be determined at the local level whether a particular jurisdiction wants to adopt a particular code by a local ordinance. Many times, a separate state agency (health and/or environmental state agency) oversees public pools and spas; therefore, it is also imperative to work with this agency to ensure any public pool or spa rule adopts construction & design language consistent with the ISPSC.

*continued on next page*

## 6. Why would a state or locality want to adopt the ISPSC?

### Adoption of the ISPSC will:

- Substantially reduce child drowning or near drowning incidents by introducing or enhancing existing barrier requirements in residential pools and spas
- Eliminate electrical incidents in and around pools and spas by requiring compliance with the National Electric Code
- Save lives and reduce visits to the ER by establishing state-of-the-art comprehensive code that reduces child drowning by requiring barriers, and compliant designs for slopes, exits and entry
- Eliminate entrapment incidents and ensure Virginia Graeme Baker Act compliance and eligibility under the VGB State Grant Program by reference to APSP/PHTA-7 Standard for Suction Entrapment Avoidance
- Ensure pools & in-ground spas are built with proper materials
- Reduce both energy & water consumption in pools and spas
- Make life easier for code inspectors by adopting simple, understandable & verifiable language
- Provide access: state and local jurisdictions adopting the ISPSC are eligible for Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) yearly training money
- Use time-proven ANSI/APSP/PHTA standards by reference and integration.
- Ensure barrier, decking and lighting provisions coordinating with the International Building Code (IBC)
- Cover all types of aquatic vessels, including residential and public pools, portable and in-ground spas, water parks, exercise spas, hot tubs, and interactive water features
- Based on up to date, scientific and third-party testing and research on issues such as entrapment prevention, drowning prevention, energy usage, materials and dimensions

- Require portable spas to be certified to the latest industry standards, eliminating the need to inspect inaccessible interior components
- Provide you with the first swimming pool and spa code to address aquatic recreation facilities
- Provide you the first swimming pool and spa code to address energy usage by including an energy standard for residential portable electric spas and for residential in-ground swimming pool and spa equipment

## 7. If there is a state-wide adoption of the ISPSC (state law), is a locality or municipality forced to comply with the entire ISPSC?

Depending on the state and the language in the bill, some cities, towns, and counties have the option to amend the ISPSC. In some states, like Georgia or Virginia, for example, the adoption of any building codes, are implemented statewide, but the state may also choose to amend any portion through the triennial code adoption process. Other states, like South Carolina or Illinois, simply leave it to the locals to consider adoption. Whereas in Texas, the law states that a municipality must follow the ISPSC if they already have existing pool codes in place. Texas House Bill 2858, signed by Governor Abbott June 14, 2019, adopted the 2018 ISPSC as the municipal swimming pool and spa code in Texas. This bill allows for municipalities to establish procedures for: (1) adoption of local amendments to the ISPSC, and (2) the administration and enforcement of the ISPSC. This gives power to a municipality to either fully adopt or partially adopt, and enforce the ISPSC, based off what is best for their community.

## 8. How will the ISPSC be enforced?

Once adopted by a state or locality, building and/or health inspectors will enforce the ISPSC through the permitting and inspection processes. Direct action against noncompliant facilities may be taken by local building or health officials enforcing state or health building codes that reference the ISPSC. Violations of the Code may prevent issuance of a permit or certificate of occupancy, subject a covered pool to closure, and/or subject the builder or owner/operator to civil liability or penalties.

*continued on next page*

**9. Does the ISPSC cover public pools, spas, & aquatic recreation facilities?** Yes, the ISPSC covers all aspects of design and construction of public (commercial) pools, spas & aquatic recreation facilities by incorporating language from the ANSI/PHTA/ICC-1 Standard and incorporating best practices from state codes. Further, it separates public pools into several discreet and necessary categories (including semi-public, distinguishing between large municipal and hotel or condominium pools for example) as well as spas (inground, portable and swim).

**10. Does the ISPSC apply to both existing and new pools and spas?** As a design and construction code the ISPSC is intended to apply to newly constructed or renovated pools and spas (meaning those built or renovated after the date the new code goes into effect). Individual jurisdictions can elect to make certain provisions retroactive or require that when certain parts are being replaced, they must comply with the new code, i.e. drain covers or energy efficient pumps or motors.

**11. How many editions of the ISPSC currently exist?** The 2021 ISPSC is the 4th and current edition available for adoption, in addition to the 2018, 2015 and 2012 editions. The 2021 edition was published in October 2020; therefore most states currently adopt the 2018 edition but are expected to begin considering the new 2021 edition now that it is available. Currently there are 14 mandatory state adoptions, 19 states with optional local adoptions, and an international adoption: the Cayman Islands. Nearly 400 localities have already adopted an edition of the ISPSC in the United States. More states and localities are currently in the process of adopting the ISPSC or considering updating to a newer edition. As with all I-Codes, the ISPSC undergoes a rigorous triennial review process, allowing a code to be open to improvement as new technologies and scientific advances are presented. Proposals have been submitted for consideration of what will become the 2024 ISPSC. As a result, nearly

400 local jurisdictions nationwide have adopted the ISPSC and 33 states have adopted the ISPSC as mandatory or optional enforcement statewide. Visit our [ISPSC Adoption Status Report](#) to see where the ISPSC is currently adopted and more information about this industry code.

**12. Where can I learn more about 2021 ISPSC requirements?** PHTA will begin training on the 2021 International Swimming Pool & Spa Code in-person during the fall of 2021. The course is designed to help builders and inspectors understand the many changes to pool construction including calculations of total dynamic head (TDH), SOFAs, barriers, and additional construction requirements. The course addresses the code regarding quality, safety, energy, and conservation per the ANSI/PHTA/ICC approved standards. Information and schedules for all versions of the course can be found on the PHTA website at [www.phta.org](http://www.phta.org). The ISPSC also provides a concise commentary book for users that provides an understanding of requirements found in the code. Information on both the ISPSC and the ISPSC Commentary can be found on the PHTA website and at [www.ICCsafe.org](http://www.ICCsafe.org), where it is also available in Spanish!

**13. How can PHTA members help to ensure adoption of the ISPSC in their State or Locality?** They can start by discussing the ISPSC with their local building officials and inspectors, hold joint PHTA and ICC (building official & inspector) meetings to discuss when the next opening for adoption of a new code is in a particular state or locality, and then participate in the rulemaking process to support the adoption of the ISPSC. PHTA members can also encourage their building officials and inspectors to discuss with health inspectors the importance of the ISPSC, to encourage consistency between any rules (codes) adopted by the health inspectors. For more information and assistance on ISPSC adoption where you live, contact [PHTA Government Relations & Code Staff](#).

*continued on next page*



**Pool & Hot Tub Alliance**

2111 Eisenhower Avenue, Suite 500  
Alexandria, VA 22314

[www.phta.org](http://www.phta.org) | 703-838-0083 | [memberservices@phta.org](mailto:memberservices@phta.org)