



FOUNDATION OF THE INDUSTRY

Quietly, below the surface, standards provide crucial support for all our endeavors

By Amy Willer and Genevieve Lynn

“STANDARDS ARE THE foundation of modern civilization, dating back to Roman roads and beyond,” says Steve Barnes, director of science and compliance at AquaStar Pool Products.

Standards are also the foundation of the pool, hot tub and spa industry, and standards development is at the core of the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance’s (PHTA) mission. This year, PHTA is proud to be celebrating its 40th anniversary as an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Accredited Standards Developer.

Barnes, who is chair of the PHTA

Standards Process Committee, explains that standards serve as voluntary consensus guidelines but can become mandatory if adopted into law, which is the case with many PHTA standards.

“Standards define the pass/fail criteria needed to confirm success,” says Barnes, who has been involved in the standards development process for nearly 20 years. “This is how our industry builds consumer trust.”

IMPORTANCE

The main role of PHTA standards is to bring safety and responsibility to the industry, but they are important

in many other ways. They also raise the level of industry knowledge among inspectors, builders, health and building code departments, legislatures, and regulators and help with implementation.

The standards development process strengthens PHTA’s relationships with outside standards and community organizations, such as UL, NSF International, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), the National Plasterers Council (NPC), and the National Drowning Prevention Alliance (NDPA). Promoting the adoption of standards at the federal, state and local levels

also leads to coordination with government agencies including the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Energy Commission and others.

PHTA members are able to serve as volunteer leaders on the different standards committees and increase their own visibility as subject matter experts. The committee members are often asked to speak at industry events, teach educational sessions related to the standards, and be interviewed by journalists looking for more information on these topics.

HISTORY

PHTA is the leading industry organization recognized by ANSI to develop and promote national consensus standards for residential and public swimming pools, hot tubs and spas. Since 1983, PHTA has developed and revised 16 industry standards covering construction, maintenance, safety, energy efficiency, and other important topics. These standards impact every sector of the pool, hot tub and spa industry, and their development has been a focus of PHTA (then the National Swimming Pool Institute [NSPI]) since its founding in 1956.

After hearing concerns that the standards were industry-dominated and serving the industry rather than consumers, NSPI sought external validation and received ANSI approval in 1983. The NSPI Board of Directors understood the value of standards, giving the Technical Committee responsibility for the association's American National Standards (ANS) development process.

NSPI published its first five ANSI standards in 1991 and 1992, covering the topics of public pools, public spas, permanently installed residential spas, aboveground/onground residential swimming pools, and residential portable spas/hot tubs.

NSPI-5, the standard for residential inground swimming pools, was published in 1995. This was "the crown jewel of the group," according to Barnes, because this standard was later referenced in several state laws and codes.

NSPI changed its name to the Association of Pool & Spa

Professionals (APSP) in 2004, but the name change only strengthened the organization's commitment to standards development.

A milestone occurred in 2006, when the APSP-7 standard on suction entrapment avoidance was published two years before Congress passed the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool & Spa Safety Act (VGBA). "APSP-7 provided an important tool for designing and

evaluating all five suction system hazards two years ahead of the federal law going into effect," explains Barnes. "As a voting member of the APSP-7 Standard Writing Committee (SWC), it was extremely gratifying to read the new federal law and see that APSP-7 provided a roadmap for contractors to prove their pools and spas comply with the new VGBA law. I'm convinced this is why PHTA-7 is now the suction

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safety systems standard used by over 30 states and hundreds of local jurisdictions.”

In 2011, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recognized the APSP-16 standard as the successor drain cover standard to the ASME/ANSI standard. Currently, APSP-16 2017 is federal law and listed in the Federal Register. The VGBA requires that drain covers must comply with entrapment protection requirements specified in the APSP-16 2017 standard.

A partnership with the International Code Council (ICC) began in 2012, when PHTA (then APSP) and the ICC produced the first edition of the International Swimming Pool and Spa Code (ISPSC), which is compatible with the International Codes (I-codes) for building safety. Since then, both groups have continued to develop and update the published 2015, 2018 and 2021 versions of the ISPSC. Content is largely derived from or cites the PHTA standards. An agreement between the two organizations fosters collaboration in the industry, as reflected in the co-branding of the PHTA standards and the ISPSC.

APSP merged with the National Swimming Pool Foundation (NSPF) in 2019 to form the PHTA we know today.

In 2022, PHTA launched its Center of Technical Excellence to ensure its technical activities and initiatives are at the forefront of the industry. The newly developed Technical Advisory Council now oversees the Standards Process Committee, the Recreational Water & Air Quality Committee, the Code Action Committee, and the Editorial Review Committee, with a fifth committee on research and grants to be formed in the future. The Standards Consensus Committee continues to work closely with the Standard Writing Committees (SWCs); each standard has its own SWC. Expanding the center allows for even more participation from PHTA members and industry stakeholders overall.

“The major objective of the Center of Technical Excellence is to improve the responsiveness of PHTA to the technical and educational needs of its members,” explains PHTA Technical Advisory Council Chair Joseph Laurino, Ph.D., president and CEO of Periodic Products, Inc.

IN THE 40TH YEAR

An exciting part of the 40th anniversary celebration took place in February 2023: the publication of the brand-new ANSI/PHTA/ICC-2 American National Standard for Public Pool and Spa Operations and Maintenance. This was a PHTA Commercial Council initiative greenlighted by the PHTA Board of Directors in 2017. This standard is significant because it provides state-of-the-art public pool policies in an easy-to-use and reference document that was diligently written to follow and improve upon PHTA’s existing knowledge base and that of the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC), which is developed and updated by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“While known for suction entrapment preventions, energy efficiency, and applied hydraulics, I am most proud to have been part of the PHTA-2 development team because effective operations and maintenance policy impact every public pool user there is,” says Barnes. “Helping to achieve and consistently maintain water quality is, and always will be, the most consequential responsibility we have as an association and an industry.”

Currently, two SWCs are working on review and revision of drafts for the PHTA-1 Standard for Public Pool and Spa Design, Construction, and Installation and PHTA-16 Standard for Suction Outlet Fitting Assemblies (SOFAs) for Use in Pools, Spas, and Hot Tubs. The PHTA-1 Standard would complement the ANSI/PHTA/ICC-2 Standard on public pools and spas operations and maintenance. At the first meeting of the PHTA-16 SWC,

“Helping to achieve and consistently maintain water quality is, and always will be, the most consequential responsibility we have as an association and an industry.”

Mark Eilbert of the CPSC spoke on what is in the public interest and under their authority as an agency. Topics are being identified for further discussion by the committees.

The 40th anniversary celebration will culminate at PSP/Deck Expo in Las Vegas this November. PHTA is hosting a reception at Resorts World – Conrad to honor the many volunteers who dedicated incalculable time and effort to developing these standards and shared their commitment to elevating the entire pool, hot tub and spa industry.

To learn more about the PHTA/ANSI standards development process, visit phta.org/standards. ~

Questions or comments on this article?
Please email editors@aquamagazine.com

PHTA STANDARDS AT PSP/DECK EXPO

- **PHTA ANSI & Standards 40th Anniversary Reception**
 - » Sunday, November 12, 7:30 – 8:30 p.m., at Resorts World – Conrad
- **PHTA Session: Adopting ANSI/PHTA/ICC-2 Standard as a Companion to the International Swimming Pool & Spa Code**
 - » Monday, November 13, 1 – 2 p.m., Room W213
 - » Tuesday, November 14, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m., Room W231 (World Aquatic Health Conference)