



Frequently Asked Questions

Drain Cover Service Life & Replacement

Q How can I determine the life expectancy of installed fittings/covers?

A The service life is marked on the top of the cover using the format “Life: X Years” or similar. This information is also available in the instructions or by contacting the manufacturer.

Q When does cover service life begin?

A When it is installed, regardless of when the pool is filled. The month and year of installation should be recorded and readily available. This is a requirement at public pools and is highly advised in residential pools as well.

Q Why is drain cover service life so important?

A Most drain covers are made from some kind of plastic and all plastic loses strength over time, especially in sunlight. This is often invisible to the eye. Broken drains are one of the leading causes of suction entrapment related injuries. Therefore, preventative maintenance is essential. Just as with a car, timely replacement protects against the unthinkable.

Q What if the existing cover is not marked with a service life?

A All manufactured covers must have this information on them. If your cover does not, it does not comply with the Standard that has been in effect since 2007. The only exceptions are large custom grate designed and certified by a Registered Design Professional. In this case the service life is documented in the engineering plans or related documents.

Q Can I simply replace the expired cover with the same model?

A That depends. If the original installation is known to be fully compliant, yes. If compliance status is unknown, a full evaluation should be completed by a qualified professional.

Q If the pool was retrofitted as part of the 2011 recall, is replacement still necessary now?

A Probably, since most covers state a life expectancy of 7 years or less. If a riser ring or similar component was added beneath the existing cover/grate per the recall Corrective Action Plan, then you must count from the date of the cover’s original installation.

Q Can I install the new cover myself?

A The PHTA strongly recommends that all drain cover installations and replacements be performed by an industry professional.

Q Can I use existing fasteners when replacing covers?

A No. All drain covers and related hardware must be installed with the new fasteners supplied by the manufacturer.

Q What if the supplied fasteners do not fit the existing screw holes?

A Then the replacement cover is most likely not compatible and should not be used, unless the instructions provide another way to securely attach the cover. In most cases, the best option is the installation of a new mounting frame.

Q What if the screws fit, but one or more keeps turning and will not tighten down the cover?

A Then the cover is not properly installed and the pool MUST not be used until fixed. Check the replacement cover installation instructions for guidance. If they don’t fully address the situation, contact the manufacturer. In either event an industry professional should be consulted.

Q Can I simply use a different cover with the same or higher flow rating?

A Not without first consulting an industry professional to perform a complete evaluation of your needs. There are too many important safety considerations that have to be assessed including sump depth, fastener integrity, flow ratings and pumping power.

Q What do qualified professionals use to fully address suction safety and compliance?

A They rely on the ANSI/APSP/ICC-7 Standard for Suction Entrapment Avoidance in Swimming Pools, Wading Pools, Spas, Hot Tubs, and Catch Basins. This American National Standard is written specifically to address all these issues and is designed to be used in the field. It provides a variety of tools to assist in the proper evaluation of each pumping system, such as maximum flow rates, number and spacing of multiple drains, and it includes a wide-ranging Field Checklist found in the back under, Appendix B. This is a troubleshooting-type guide that will identify important safety concerns and possible solutions. The Standard and bulk copies of the APSP/ICC-7 Field Checklist are available at APSP.org. (PHTA?)

Q Who is responsible for paying for the cost of replacement?

A All costs and expenses are the responsibility of the pool owner / operator.

Q How do I determine if a drain cover is compliant?

A The cover will be marked with one of several certification marks that are different depending on when the cover was originally tested and certified. Look for one or more of the following on the top or visible sides of the cover:

- ASME/ANSI A112.19.8 – 2007,
- ASME/ANSI A112.19.8a – 2008,
- ASME/ANSI A112.19.8b – 2009,
- VGB-2008 (typically included with one of the others),
- ANSI/APSP – 2011, or
- Coming Soon – VGBA-2019 (ANSI/APSP/ICC – 2017)

Q Why are there so many certification marks?

A The development of the applicable Standard allowed for various markings over time. All are acceptable. The VGB-2008 and ANSI/APSP-2011 are different in name only. The newest Standard, ANSI/APSP/ICC –16 2017 calls for the “VGBA-2019” mark. Short and easy to recognize.

Q Does the new standard require public pools to be retroactively updated with these new drain covers, even before they expire?

A No. So long as the existing drain cover is compliant, was installed according to the manufacturer’s instructions, and is in good condition (meaning it is not broken or loose), it may remain to use until its expiration date. If any cover is broken, loose or missing, the pool is in NOT compliant and must be closed until proper repair/replacement is made.

Q What about spare drain covers that are still in the manufacturer’s bag or box?

A All prior models with any of the above markings may still be purchased and installed.

Q Why can’t I buy a drain cover that doesn’t stick up from the floor so much? My cleaner keeps getting stuck!

A The domed or raised shape is necessary to prevent body entrapment (a body forming a seal over the cover), one of the leading causes of suction entrapments before the 2007 VGB Act. Many models are available for most size drains. Ask your industry professional to help you select one best suited to your overall needs.

Q My new drain cover came with a riser ring and the cover fits the existing sump without using it. Is it okay to install the drain cover without the riser ring?

A No! All covers must be installed as instructed. If the instructions require the use of the ring, then it is essential to prevent body entrapment. They should never be removed.

Q Why are some drain covers flat and flush mount while other are not?

A Larger drain covers that have been certified as unblockable can be flat. The federal VGB Act allows the use a single unblockable drain, as an alternative to multiple smaller drains. Some state codes, however, still require multiple drains in all pools.

Q What is “sump depth” and why does it matter since it is under a certified drain cover anyway?

A The word “sump” refers to the space between any cover and the suction piping supplying water to the pump. As water passes through the cover, headed for the suction pipe opening, turbulence is created and when strong enough it will tangle and twist hair. This has the potential to lock it in and around the drain cover. Turbulence, and suction power, become more extreme as the flow increases and at some point, ALL drain covers will tangle hair. This is one reason why drain covers have a flow rating that must never be exceeded.

Q The drain cover is missing, is it okay to swim if the pump is turned off?

A NO. The open pipe created a DANGEROUS risk of limb entrapment. An arm or leg can get stuck in the pipe. This has happened, especially with children.