

OPEN & SHUT CASES

Case studies, news updates and home-pool safety problem-solvers from Swish Automation.
info@swishautomation.com
www.swishautomation.com
0800 279 474



Pool safety news selections: Bifold door topics

PDF P3 The heart of a solution for child safety in home pool zones

- SelfLatch – core component of a safety-compliant system
- Compensating for the human factor
- Can audible alarm systems achieve safety compliance?
- Working with territorial authorities
- Forward planning saves time and cost
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PDF P4 Bifold doorways to the home poolside: compliance challenges

- Preserving indoor/outdoor benefits of poolside bifold doors
- Minimising physical and visual barriers to pool-zone lifestyle
- Practical alternatives to costly and unsightly pool fencing
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- Achieving compliance with customised problem-solving
- Suggested safety system solutions for bifold door types
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PDF P5 Raising the standard for home pool safety


- How architectural trends influenced safety law change
- Popularity of bifold doors and pool-zone safety measures
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- Raising safety standards with a different approach
- How an alarm system may achieve pool safety compliance
- DoorMinder/SelfLatch™ Alarm System explained



Note: The pages of this compilation were originally prepared as stand-alone documents to answer questions on various home-pool safety topics at different times. It has been necessary to repeat some essential information in each issue, such as current legal requirements for pool safety compliance and the vital importance of constant adult supervision of small children in or near water.

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The heart of a solution for child safety in the home pool zone: SelfLatch

This unobtrusive device is central to a range of child-resistant home pool safety solutions.

To be truly child-resistant, doors directly accessing a home pool area are only safety-compliant when self-closing and self-latching.

Two devices are required to perform the task, with the larger, more complex self-closer often considered to be the most important.

The heart of the matter is actually the self-latching device. Correctly installed, this is the only part of the safety system which turns the door into a child-resistant barrier.

Self-closers and alarms, while very much a part of fully integrated safety systems, are purely safeguards against human error. They compensate for two basic human foibles – needs for greater convenience, and tendencies to forgetfulness.

Self-latching devices are not new – indeed, they're a standard feature of nearly every hinged door. But almost 90% of doors between house and pool are sliding panels, for which no self-latching



device existed until 2005, when Swish developed New Zealand's first dedicated self-latching device for sliding doors. Installed at least 1500mm from floor level, SelfLatch has become the core safety component for pool entrances, not only for sliding doors, but many other door types.

While Swish SelfClose devices only provide the supporting role for SelfLatch, they remain the most complex part of any installation. SelfClose devices must be able to operate a vast range of door types, panel weights and configurations – challenges which they are able to meet with stylish functionality.

The DoorMinder system, a combination of SelfLatch and audible alarm, may be used where door closers are, for various reasons, impracticable (O&SC7, July 2013).

While it exceeds NZS 8500:2006 and meets FoSPA intentions, DoorMinder requires pre-approval from territorial authorities, whose interpretations of the current 1987 law tend to vary by region.

The devil is in the detail

Although door-set design may be a relatively minor aspect in the overall scheme of home planning, the importance of child safety around the home pool brings it sharply into focus. The uniqueness of every home pool environment adds its own challenges.



Left: Releasing SelfLatch is a two-handed action beyond the co-ordinative ability of adventurous young hands, and out of reach at 1500mm above floor level. SelfLatch is operable from both sides of the door.

Home-pool safety compliance, while often a frustrating process to achieve, has child-safety objectives every parent and pool owner must respect. To achieve it, forward planning – and an eye for detail – from architects, builders and door fabricators, will save costly duplicated effort later.

In a nutshell

Wherever doors to the home pool exist or are specified, child safety is paramount. SelfLatch is the core element of several safety solutions:

1. SelfLatch/SelfClose
2. DoorMinder system (SelfLatch with alarm)
3. SelfClose and DoorMinder (three safety levels)

These systems are fit-for-purpose and the finest available. Yet, nothing is 'fail-safe'. There is no substitute for adult supervision of small children around water – pool, pond, lake, river or seaside. ■

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Bifold doorways to the home poolside: unique challenges for safety compliance

Smart solutions are needed to achieve pool safety compliance – and minimise visual and physical barriers to indoor/outdoor lifestyle enjoyment

In making the most of 'open-wall' architecture, by maximising indoor/outdoor pedestrian flow and providing uninterrupted views to our pleasure space, bifold doors are a practical, attractive solution.

They're a popular choice for welcoming the home poolside into the indoor/outdoor lifestyle plan. But to preserve all the benefits of bifold doors alongside the challenges of providing a safe home pool environment, innovative solutions are needed.

Unique challenges, customised solutions

The first concerns are child safety and compliance under the Fencing and Swimming Pools Act 1987. To comply, we can have self-closing and self-latching doors accessing home pool areas – or fences.

For many home pool owners, the latter is not an option. After all, the objective of open-wall architecture is an ideal merging of indoor/outdoor lifestyles by diminishing visual and physical barriers.

And the greatest advantage of bifold door design presents its own challenges. Choices of panel configurations offer more benefits than other door type – but each requires a customised solution for safety compliance in the home pool environment.



Uninterrupted views of the pool and open-plan benefits offered by poolside bifold doors can be preserved, but the most aesthetically acceptable pool safety solutions need special approval.

Some bifold door designs defy the best efforts of self-closing devices, but Swish has alternative safety systems to preserve their open-plan benefits and aesthetic appeal – as well as meeting pool safety standards under NZS 8500-2006.

Consider the DoorMinder™ SelfLatch/Alarm system, concealed neatly inside the stile of the main passage door. Providing enough time for normal passage, the alarm sounds if the door is open for 10 seconds to warn that the pool area could be accessible by unsupervised children.

However, until NZS 8500-2006 is accepted into a new Act (expected in 2012), such solutions are treated as exceptions by local authorities, and pre-approval is recommended before installation.

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Top: French or bifold doors with passage doors hinged on a wall accepts Swish SelfClose/SelfLatch systems.



Right: Passage doors hinged on bifold panels are impractical for self-closers, but can achieve safety compliance with the Swish DoorMinder SelfLatch/Alarm system, pre-installed or retrofitted.

The new Fencing and Swimming Pools Act should retain its original objective – prevention of unsupervised access to swimming pools by children under six years old, and non-swimmers.

Ensuring that doors directly accessing pool areas must self-close and self-latch – or have other accepted safety solutions – is a valuable contribution to water safety at home. Dedicated supervision of small children in and around water – at home and away – remains the best contribution of all. ■

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Raising the standard for home pool safety

As the pool zone becomes more integrated into home design, the need for new, fit-for-purpose pool safety solutions is on the rise.

The Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987 required a barrier around home pools to prevent unsupervised access by small children. The Act allowed walls to form part of the barrier provided that doors to the pool area were self-closing and self-latching.

Since then, home design parameters have been in a state of constant change, presenting new challenges for even the most robust self-closing systems. Door loads have almost tripled as a result of several factors. Energy-saving legislation now demands double glazing for many new homes in colder climate zones. Open-wall architecture has found wider popularity. And indoor-outdoor recreation areas are becoming more integrated, many with home pools as a central feature.

It became urgent to broaden the Act to include the introduction of practical new pool safety solutions to cope with these changes, as well as an expanding diversity of new door designs and configurations.

Welcome guidelines

NZS 8500:2006 offered welcome guidelines to standardise pool safety systems nationwide until



Left: Although this 145Kg home spa pool door is operated successfully with a SelfLatch/SelfClose system, doors heavier than this can present challenges. Similarly, self-closers are impractical for bifold doors, especially if the passage door is hinged on a folding section. DoorMinder alarm systems offer effective home-pool safety solutions for both, with innovative componentry concealed within the door-frame.

FoSPA was upgraded to meet changing demands.

The standard provides 'approved alternative solutions' to FoSPA with the objective of unifying the diverse and often contradictory interpretations of the Act by territorial authorities. And one particular alternative solution was to stand out from the rest – an innovative system which was designed to not only meet NZS 8500:2006, but exceed it ...

DoorMinder™ SelfLatch/Alarm System

Door alarms and manual doorbolts might have been considered an adequate pool safety measure under NZS 8500:2006 2.3.2(f), but DoorMinder has added

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an extra safety level by incorporating the Swish SelfLatch device as part of the system.

For heavy slide doors, this puts simultaneous unlatching and opening beyond a small child's reach, strength and co-ordinative ability. And regardless of door style, the 85dB alert sounds ten seconds after an unlatching and opening action to warn that the pool-zone barrier has been breached.

Integrated with SelfLatch, the alarm provides a practical alternative to the SelfClose device, meeting the intent of the Act by warning that the door should be closed and latched after each use. The use of such alternative safety solutions requires 'by-exemption' approval from territorial authorities in the compliance consent process, well in advance of installation.

At the very least, DoorMinder sends a clear signal for safety awareness – an audible reminder for constant supervision of children in the pool-zone. ■

Right: The entire DoorMinder system fits neatly out of sight inside the door stile. The SelfLatch lever features on both sides of the door, at least 1500mm above floor level, beyond reach of little hands.

