

OPEN & SHUT CASES

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 present its own challenges. Choices of panel configurations may 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.

Case studies, news updates and home-pool safety problem-solvers from Swish Automation.
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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. ■