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The heart of the 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. ■