

News Splash

Spring 2025



Can you hear me now?

Does your pool or spa still have a single main drain? Well, listen up—you need to have an audible alarm!

Water recreation facilities built with single main drains have more safety requirements. Having only one main drain creates a higher risk of drain entrapment.

If you have a single main drain, you most likely have one of the following:

- **Safety vacuum release system (SVRS) with automatic shut-off and alarm.**

It is often a device that connects to your pump. You can usually find it mounted on the wall in your pump room. An SVRS automatically shuts your pump off when it detects high levels of suction—like if someone becomes entrapped on the drain.



Example of an SVRS device from lesliespool.com.

- **Unblockable drain with emergency shut-off switch and alarm.**

Most unblockable drains look like long channels. They are difficult for someone to cover with their body. The entire drain outlet—including the sump—must be unblockable. Putting an unblockable drain cover on a blockable sump doesn't meet requirements.



Example of an unblockable drain from aquastarpoolproducts.com.

Your unblockable drain must have an emergency shut-off switch. The shut-off switch can be either automatic or manual but must shut off the pump. Your manual shut-off switch must be within 20 feet of the pool. Clearly label it "Emergency Shut-Off Switch."

Both options must include an audible alarm.

The alarm must sound at 80–85 decibels in the pool area or an area where staff is always present when the pool is open. It must connect to your emergency shut-off switch or SVRS.

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Test the shut-off switch at least once every 6 months to ensure it properly shuts down the pump and the alarm sounds.

You must keep a written log of test results. If you can't show how you test your shut-off switch, you may need to install two main drains. The safest choice is to remodel your facility and install two main drains. Be sure to consult with the Health Department before making modifications.

Are you going with the flow? Check your flow meter!

A flow meter shows how quickly water is moving through your plumbing.

The flow can indicate when your filter is dirty and whether you are meeting the required turnover time. You can also use it to help troubleshoot water quality problems.

Most flow meters are downstream from the filter to prevent debris from entering the meter. Some flow meters have bobbers that float in a clear plastic tube. Others have a red stripe that moves with the flow of the water.

If your flow meter has 2 scales, make sure you:

- ✓ Read the gallons per minute (gpm) flow.
- ✓ Use the scale showing your correct pipe size. You can check an elbow fitting to find your pipe size. Most fittings have the sizes in inches printed on them.
- ✓ Use the scale showing your type of piping. Most pools are built with SCH 40 piping.

Some flow meters (like the kind with bobbers) need long lengths of straight piping.

There can't be elbows before and after the flow meter. If the pipe is too short, it can show an incorrect flow—up to 10% inaccurate!

Do you have limited straight lengths of piping or want a more accurate reading of your flow?

You may need to install a different type of flow meter.

I have my flow rate—now what?

Record your flow rate daily on your log sheet. This helps you identify any trends and troubleshoot problems.

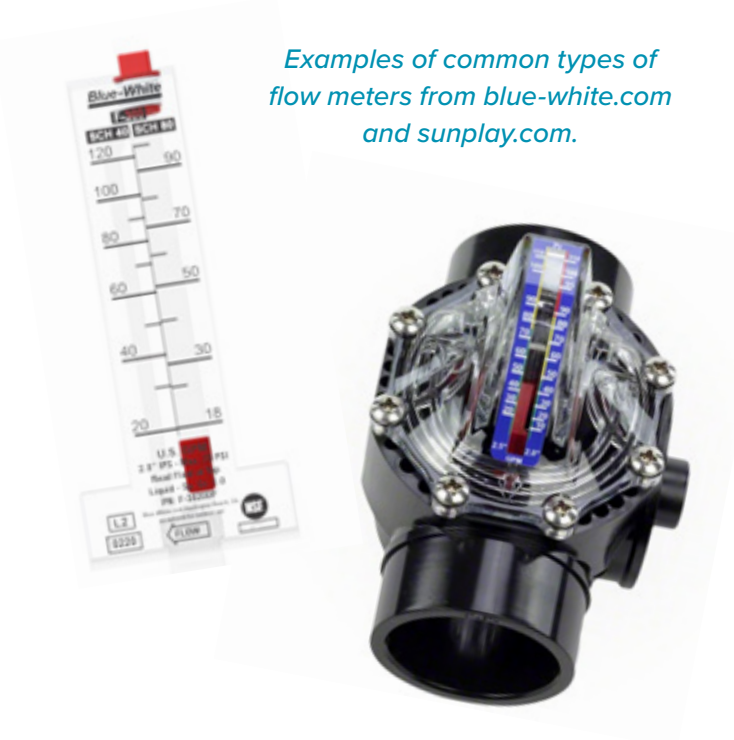
Low flow rates could mean:

- Your filter is dirty and you need to backwash.
- You have a clog in the line.

A big increase in flow rate could mean:

- A pump setting was incorrectly reset.

! If your system's flow rate is too high, it can be dangerous and lead to entrapment on a drain. Contact the Health Department if you notice higher than normal flow rates.



Examples of common types of flow meters from blue-white.com and sunplay.com.

Make sure your system meets turnover rate requirements.

	How to calculate turnover rate	Required turnover rate
Swimming pool	$\frac{\text{Gallons of water in pool}}{\text{Observed flow rate on flow meter}} \div 60 = \text{Turnover rate in hours}$	6 hours (360 minutes) or less
Spa	$\frac{\text{Gallons of water in spa}}{\text{Observed flow rate on flow meter}} = \text{Turnover rate in minutes}$	30 minutes or less

Permit Renewals are Coming

Double check your information is up to date!

We mail pool and spa permit renewals every spring to our permit holders. When you receive your permit renewal, be sure to:

- ✓ **Double check the UBI.** If your UBI has changed, you have changed ownership and we do not have the correct ownership on file. You must complete a change of ownership statement and water recreation facility application.
- Need forms?** Email communitysafety@tpchd.org or go to tpchd.org/pools and click the **Plan Review** button.
- ✓ **Check your mailing address is correct.** This is the address we mail invoices and permits to.
 - ✓ **Ensure your emergency contact info is up to date.** We use these contacts if we can't reach anyone at your facility.
 - ✓ **Pay for your permit by May 1.** Late fees will apply after. If you don't pay, we may have to close your facility.

Did you know you can easily pay for your permit online?

All you need is the account ID and invoice ID printed on your permit renewal statement. You can pay online at tpchd.org/payonline with your Visa, MasterCard, or Discover card.

Kids can disappear in the blink of an eye—are you watching?

Drowning is the leading cause of death for children 1–4 years old. It is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children 5–14 years old. Unlike in the movies with flailing arms and screaming, drowning can be silent and quick. This is why it's important to supervise kids in or near the water even if they know how to swim.



Stay alert!

- ➔ Put down your phone or book when you are supervising.
- ➔ Keep within an arm's length of the child you are watching.
- ➔ Don't rely only on lifeguards—you should still be watching.
- ➔ Don't allow your child into the pool enclosure area without a responsible guardian.
- ➔ Consider more swim lessons even if your child knows how to swim. They can always improve swimming skills and increase their comfort in the water.

Plan Review Process Updates

Are you planning to complete a remodel to your pool or spa or make changes that need plan review? Be aware the plan review process changed in 2025.

What's changed?

The plan review fee no longer includes pre-opening inspections. We will bill these separately and you must pay before the inspection.

We will continue to charge new construction plan reviews at a flat rate and remodel plan reviews at the hourly rate up until we approve the project.

Why did this change?

Previously we charged an hourly rate for pre-opening inspections for remodels. This included travel time to reach the site. For facilities in remote locations, this resulted in a higher cost than a facility nearby.

Now, we charge all facilities the same rate. This may help you divide costs for the plan review process among the engineer and pool contractor.

Are pre-opening inspections required?

Ask your plan reviewer to see if you can send pictures or videos instead of an in-person inspection.

Questions?

Contact us at communitysafety@tpchd.org or (253) 649-1713.

2025 Fee Updates

Tacoma-Pierce County Board of Health adopted the proposed 2025 Fee Schedule on Dec. 4, 2024.

What does this mean for you?

- Seasonal permit—\$575.
- Annual permit—\$920.
- Reinspection fee—\$230.

Your first reinspection is no charge.

- Compliance schedule follow-up—\$230.

If you correct the compliance schedule item by the time of the follow-up, there is no charge.

Questions?

Contact us at communitysafety@tpchd.org or (253) 649-1713.

2025 Pool Operator Classes

Learn how to run a safe pool or hot tub.

We cover pool chemistry and basic operation. This basic class is free. You don't have to register.

- May 15, 9–11 a.m.
- June 25, 9–11 a.m.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Auditorium
3629 S. D St.
Tacoma, WA 98418

Questions?

Contact communitysafety@tpchd.org or (253) 649-1713 for more info.



Washington State Board of Health considering updating water recreation facility code

The state's Technical Advisory Committee is drafting new rule language now.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the process, view meetings, and review the draft language.



Have feedback?

Pool owners or operators and members of the public can send their feedback to:
waterrecreation@doh.wa.gov

COMMUNITY SAFETY PROGRAM

Have questions? Or want to schedule a consultation?

Contact us! We're available Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Phone (253) 649-1713

Email communitysafety@tpchd.org