

The Raffarin Law - swimming pools in France

In December 2002 the French government passed the Raffarin Law. This regulates the safety of 'inground' swimming pools.

The law was introduced to help reduce the number of deaths by drowning, particularly of under fives. The new regulations have been in force since May 2004 and apply to all privately owned buried or partially buried swimming pools.

This includes those at private rental properties.

We have summarised the requirements for you, but full details (in French) can be found on afnor.fr. AFNOR is the French safety standards body. Search for 'piscines' to bring up relevant standards and articles.

The following points are intended as basic guidelines but are not a definitive interpretation of French law regarding swimming pool security measures:

What does the Raffarin Law mean for me?

If you have one of the following types of pools, you are not affected by the law:

Indoor swimming pools

Ponds

Pools entirely above ground (usually accessed by a ladder)

However, all open air pools that do not fall into any of the above categories will need to comply. Failure to do so could result in a fine of €45,000.

Each safety measure (outlined below) has an NF number. This is an official mark of conformity. When fitting equipment, you must make sure it carries this mark. Your supplier or installer should be able to advise you on this.

Check with your insurance company and letting agent as to which type or make of security measure is acceptable under their terms.

As set out by AFNOR, pools covered by the Raffarin Law must be protected by at least one of the following safety measures:

Safety barriers (NF P90-306)

If a pool is collectively used, for example at a holiday home, any barrier must be at least 1.10m in height. Any access points, such as gates, must be self-closing and self-locking. They must entail at least two actions to be opened.

Any barrier must be made of a specified pool security fencing material.

Natural barriers such as hedges and ditches do not count.

Pool alarms (NF P90-307)

There are two main types of alarm available: immersion detectors and perimeter alarms.

Immersion detectors register a fall into the pool and an alarm must sound within 12 seconds.

Perimeter alarms work by using infra-red beams, which trigger an alarm when broken.

Any alarm must be tested monthly.

A responsible adult must be able to respond to the alarm in under three minutes.

Pool covers (NF P90-308)

If this is the sole safety measure, the cover must be used whenever a pool is unattended.

If you already have a cover which you use over winter (and did so before the law was passed), this must also be AFNOR approved and replaced if necessary.

If the cover is only used in winter, one of the other three measures must be employed during the summer months.

Pool shelters (abris) (NF P90-309)

This is a sturdier, more permanent cover as per the example on the right.

Shelters can either be fixed position or fitted on telescopic rails. They can also be high or low ceilinged.

This is the most expensive option, but will help with heating and cleaning costs as they keep warmth in and debris out.

The safety measures outlined in the Raffarin Law should not replace the vigilance of a responsible adult. Ensure your guests are aware of this.