



Iowa Department of Public Health

(Updated 9/20/18)

Guidance for Existing 3 Meter Diving Stands

Since 2014, the department has received four reports of falls from 3 meter diving stands (high dives) in Iowa. Fortunately, none of these recent incidents were fatal. We have, however, identified news articles associated with falls from 3 meter diving stands in other states including some of which were fatal (i.e. [Ian Freeman](#), [Kobe Cameron](#), Thomas Ulrich).

The [CPSC met with pool equipment industry leaders in 1996](#) to discuss the available information concerning falls from swimming pool slides and diving boards and the use of resilient surfacing similar to that found in playground standards. While there is [resilient surfacing](#) available, it is not routinely found at the base of ladders serving 3 meter diving stands.

Since then, others within the aquatics industry have begun calling for the use of stairways in lieu of ladders to access diving boards at 3 meter diving stands to reduce the risk of serious injury. Tom Griffiths, president of Aquatic Safety Group noted in an Athletic Business [article](#) from 2012 that “We’re just seeing far too many catastrophic falls from these things, off the ladder to the deck.” The Pool Management Group also highlights [3 meter diving board dangers](#) on their website. Gerald Dworkin of Lifesaving Resources highlighted a [case study](#) on their website resulting in a 5 million dollar jury award to a child that fell from a 3 meter diving boards resulting in injury.

A standard was developed in Canada for the [recreational use of 3 meter diving boards](#) to address the hazards associated with falls from 3 meter diving boards after a child ([Francis Bourgault Pichette](#)) died following a fall onto the concrete deck from the ladder of a 3 meter diving board. Their standard references a coroner’s 2006 report from the child’s death. It also references an injury brief relating to slips and falls from diving boards with data from the Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program (CHIRPP).

When applying a fixed vertical ladder to an aquatic environment, the slip resistance of the steps and rails can be compromised as aquatic environments are generally wet, the patrons are barefoot, and their bodies are often covered by oils (i.e. sunscreen). Ladders are typically designed to ANSI standards and OSHA requirements for use by adults but often pool patrons are children who are too small to safely use ladders designed for use by adults.

Where existing 3 meter diving stands are installed with fixed vertical ladders, additional care should be taken by the facility to reduce the risks of serious injuries associated from falls from the fixed vertical ladder to the concrete pool deck below or from the diving board itself to the concrete pool deck. Ways to reduce the risk may include but is not limited to:

- Installing resilient surfacing below the ladder and diving board to reduce the severity of injuries resulting from a fall.
- Establishing rules to limit the age or height of those using the ladder to more closely match the physical size and strength of adults.
- Providing direct supervision and training by a certified diving instructor or coach.
- Maintaining the structure and diving board free of moisture and oils.

Alternatively, the existing diving stand may be retrofitted with a staircase in lieu of the vertical ladder to eliminate the hazard associated with falls from the ladder to the deck.

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