

The Best Pool Alarms and Pool Gates

GHRI tested alarms and gates to childproof your pool

By Laura Hahn



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Safety first for swimming pools

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Before uncovering your backyard pool, consider this: Drowning is the second-leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for kids 14 and younger. An unsupervised child can slip into a pool without a sound or a splash, and in less than two minutes underwater, he can lose consciousness.

Alarms can alert parents to emergencies before it's too late. In fact, some states even have legislation requiring them. ([Learn more about pool safety legislation.](#)) The Good Housekeeping Research Institute tested seven pool alarms (they tell you when the water is disturbed) and six gate alarms (installed on a barrier around your pool, they sound when the gate is opened).

"We recommend using both pool and gate alarms. The more layers of protection, the better," says Todd Kent, GHRI's senior test engineer. "Effective alarms are not lifesaving devices, but they can alert parents to an accident, giving them time to act."

In addition to the pool and gate alarms, GHRI tested a personal immersion detector (i.e., wristband alarm). Here's how all the alarms fared.

Pool Alarms — Passed

MG International Sensor Espio (\$699)

The Espio sounded on each mannequin drop test with an average response time of 10.20 seconds, and did not alarm during the wind test. It tied with Swim Alert for the loudest alarm. This subsurface device meets all of GHRI's safety requirements.

Comments: The Espio offers a swim mode — it automatically rearms when water has calmed after a swim. It is the only subsurface alarm for which the body sits inside the pool.

And if the pool is currently being constructed, the metal support plate can actually be installed underneath the coping. Another nice feature: The alarm has magnetic controls, requiring a supplied magnetic key to enter swim mode. This design makes it more difficult for kids to bypass the system. The product also offers a remote control to enter swim mode or deactivate the alarm. The remote has a range of only around 10 feet (a safety feature that requires you to check the pool before silencing an alarm). Make sure you store the remote out of your child's reach.

RJE Technologies AquaGuard (\$495)

The AquaGuard sounded on each mannequin drop test with an average response time of 10.81 seconds, and did not alarm during the wind test. This subsurface device meets all of GHRI's safety requirements.

Comments: Like the MGI alarms, the Aquaguard offers a swim mode that detects when the water has calmed after a swim, automatically rearming the system. To enter swim mode, however, a pass code is required instead of a magnetic key. During an alarm, the device can be silenced inside the home, which might deter you from checking the pool during an alarm situation.

MG International Swim Alert (\$299)

The Swim Alert sounded on each mannequin drop test with the fastest average response time of 8.76 seconds, and did not alarm during the wind test. It tied with the Espio for the loudest alarm. This subsurface device meets all of GHRI's safety requirements.

Comments: This product was very similar to the Espio in operation, requiring magnetic keys and offering a swim mode. However, it's different in that its body is installed on the deck surface, and it does not come with a remote. You have to go to the in-pool alarm to deactivate it every time it senses a disturbance.

Poolguard PGRM-2 (\$260)

The PGRM-2 sounded on each mannequin drop with an average response time of 9.45 seconds, and did not alarm during the wind test. This subsurface device meets all of GHRI's safety requirements.

Comments: This product has the lowest price of the pool alarms that passed our test. The PGRM-2 does not offer a swim mode, so it must be removed from the pool to go swimming. If it's not replaced in the pool after a swim, the pool will go unmonitored. For safety purposes, the PGRM-2 is always on when placed in the pool, which is your visual indicator that the product is monitoring the pool. Any time the device hasn't been used for an extended period of time, it's very important to check the battery. Of the products that passed our safety criteria, this is the easiest for a child to bypass, in our opinion. She can simply hold down the button on the back, and then remove it from the pool.

Safety Turtle Wireless Wristband Alarm (\$267 for one wristband and one base station; \$85 for additional wristbands, \$420 package with one wristband and two base stations)

The Safety Turtle is the only personal immersion detector we evaluated — your kid wears a band that sounds an alarm at a separate base station if it comes in contact with the water (e.g., your kid falls in the pool). This product alarmed immediately when introduced to the water.

Comments: Your child has to wear the wristband in order for the alarm to work, and it has to be removed before he swims. The alarm will only sound for a kid wearing a wristband,

offering no protection to a child without a band who could wander into the pool area. For the best protection, having an alarm at the pool and in the home, you need to buy two base stations. This product is most suitable as a supplement for pool alarms. It is a good alarm choice for pets and young swimmers around spas or pools with water features. It can be used where the other alarms can't be installed (e.g., ponds, lakes).

Pool Alarms — Failed

SmartPool PE22 (\$180-\$200)

The PE-22 failed our safety tests and is not recommended.

Comments: This device has a sensitivity adjustment. The alarm did not sound in two of the four mannequin drop tests, and it gave a false alarm during the wind test in less than three minutes. The PE-22 could be very easy for a child to bypass — he simply has to press two buttons (that are very accessible) for three seconds. To use the pool, you must turn off the entire system, and if the alarm is not turned on after a swim, the pool will go unmonitored. It also offers no at-pool light or other visual indicator of whether the alarm is on.

Driven Designs Pool Patrol PA-30 (\$200)

The Pool Patrol PA-30 failed our safety tests and is not recommended.

Comments: The product has a sensitivity adjustment. At the least sensitive setting, it didn't alarm for any of the four mannequin drops. As a follow-up, the product was adjusted to the sensitivity recommended in the manual, and it still failed to detect half of the repeated drops. Also, when set to the most sensitive setting, the product alarmed on the wind test. To bypass the alarm, you simply have to take it out of the pool, making it very easy for your child to bypass and leading to the possibility of the device being left out of the pool after a swim.

Allweather Pool S.O.S. (\$58)

The Pool S.O.S. failed our safety tests and is not recommended. The product does not offer an in-home alarm.

Comments: The product has a sensitivity adjustment. The product can be made so sensitive that it alarms as soon as it's placed in the pool. For the drop tests, the alarm was placed in the least sensitive setting, never alarming when the mannequin entered the water. For the wind test, the sensitivity was set so the alarm could be placed in the water without alarming. Subsequently, it didn't give a false alarm in the wind test. To bypass the alarm, you can simply remove it from the pool, making it very easy for a child to bypass and leading to the possibility of the device being left out of the pool after a swim.

Pool alarm testing was conducted at Olympic Pools in Flanders, NJ

Gate Alarms — Passed

SmartPool YardGuard YG18 (\$50)

The YardGuard was the overall winner for the gate alarm. It alarmed with no delay when the gate was opened at 1 inch and 2 inches. This product offers a second reset button that can be placed on the inside of the gate, so an adult can easily exit without triggering the alarm. The main unit, placed on the outside of the gate, requires a 4-digit pass code to allow entry, making it more difficult for children or unwanted visitors to bypass. Of the products we tested, the YardGuard is the only device to have such a feature.

Pool Patrol GA-30 (\$100)

The GA-30 had the lowest sound level of all the alarms, and had a 6-second delay. We still recommend this product because it is the only gate alarm we tested that offers an in-home siren, in addition to a siren at the gate. Even with a lower sound level, it is most likely to be heard. The Pool Patrol also offers a 15-minute time delay for instances when you need to keep the gate open for longer periods of time (e.g., moving lawn furniture into the backyard).

Poolguard Door Alarm (DAPT) and Gate Alarm (GAPT) (\$60-\$75)

Poolguard offers an indoor door alarm, DAPT, and an outdoor gate alarm, GAPT. The GAPT and DAPT have 7-second delays to help prevent accidental alarms. The alarms performed well, with the loudest alarm of all the products tested.

Safety Turtle GA-101 (\$267)

The GA-101 was the only product without a siren at the gate. However, it does offer an in-home siren, and options to purchase additional base stations to expand the system. To find out if the battery is low, you have to run a test by pressing the bypass button, or by placing the unit in test mode. Overall, it was the most expensive. The Safety Turtle gate alarm and Safety Turtle Wireless Wristband Alarm can be paired to alarm the same base station, combining the layers of protection.

Techko S087 (\$30)

The S087 was very difficult to install, particularly outdoors. The nylon straps supplied to secure the magnetic switches did not fit around the test gate, and could not be screwed on like those for the other units, making it very hard to install the product properly. It also lacked an audible alert indicating a low battery. Although this product passed our tests, it was easier to install other units.