



© 123RF.COM/MACOR

SWIMMING POOLS:

Homeowner considerations before diving in

By John R. Vokey

Are you thinking of purchasing a swimming pool? Regardless of whether it's an in-ground, above-ground or inflatable pool, you need to make two phone calls prior to installing that pool. One call is to your local Town Building Department and the other call is to your insurance agent.

Swimming pools are generally an acceptable risk covered under your homeowner's policy, provided they are enclosed by a minimum 4-foot-high fence along with a gate that locks. This is a requirement regardless of the type of pool. Above-ground and inflatable pools must be protected from easy access by using a removable or retractable ladder. Typically pools with diving boards, diving rocks and/or slides are subject to additional underwriting and the carrier will determine if these are or are not acceptable

exposures.

How will a swimming pool affect your premium? In Barnstable County, most companies are using a standard rating tier as opposed to a preferred rating tier due to our coastal issues. (This impacts premiums 10 percent to 15 percent due to the hurricane exposure). So installing a swimming pool will not typically alter the rating tier. But the risk is calculated on a company-by-company basis. The MPIUA (Fair Plan) does not charge an additional premium but will inspect the property to confirm the pool is enclosed by a fence and gate and adheres to the town building codes. Other insurance companies may add a "pool surcharge" for as little as \$20. Therefore, it's important to find out what is required by the town and what is approved by your carrier to avoid any surprises.

How much coverage do you have on your homeowner's insurance? The standard homeowner's policy provides a minimum liability limit of \$100,000 and for approximately \$24 this can be increased to \$500,000. In our litigious society, you should also consider purchasing a personal liability policy, also known as an Umbrella Policy, for additional liability protection of \$1 million to \$5 million or higher to protect your assets should a lawsuit arise. Speak to your insurance agent about these important coverages. **\$**



John R. Vokey is a Vice President with Murray & MacDonald Insurance Services. He can be reached at (508) 540-2400 or john@riskadvice.com.