

Why Michael Haggard, Aquatic Attorneys Remain a Key Resource in Drowning Prevention and Litigation

Understanding the Complexity of Aquatic Injury Cases

Few areas of personal injury law demand as much specialized knowledge as aquatic injuries. Drowning, suction entrapment, cruise injuries, boating accidents, and negligent security claims each come with their own technical standards, regulatory frameworks, and evidentiary hurdles. Over the years, I have seen how a firm that truly understands these nuances can make the difference between a case that settles fairly and one that leaves a family without answers. That is where the work of Michael Haggard, Aquatic Attorneys comes into focus - not just as a legal practice, but as a resource for families navigating the aftermath of a tragedy that should never have happened.

When I first started covering aquatic safety and litigation, I assumed the legal side was straightforward: someone drowns, someone sues. But the reality is far more layered. A drowning at a hotel pool might involve questions about gate compliance, lifeguard training, or whether the drain cover met federal standards. A cruise injury might turn on maritime law and the fine print of a ticket contract. A spa injury involving suction entrapment could hinge on whether the manufacturer followed voluntary safety standards that had been known for years. These cases require a level of expertise that general practice firms rarely have. The Haggard Law Firm, based in Coral Gables, Florida, has built that expertise over decades, and the team known as Aquatic Attorneys handles these cases from coast to coast.

The Real Cost of Inadequate Pool Safety

Drowning remains one of the leading causes of accidental death for young children, and the numbers from the CPSC show no signs of a dramatic decline. What many people do not realize is that most drownings in residential and public pools are preventable. Proper barriers, compliant drain covers, working alarms, and adequate supervision all play a role. Yet every year, families lose children because a property owner cut corners on maintenance or ignored known hazards. The Virginia Graeme Baker Act, passed in 2008, was supposed to address one major hazard - suction entrapment - by requiring that public pools and spas have compliant drain covers and anti-entrapment systems. But enforcement is spotty, and many pools still operate with old equipment that can trap a child underwater in seconds.

I have spoken with pool operators who honestly did not know their drain covers were expired or that the law had changed. Others knew and simply hoped nothing would happen. That gap

between what is required and what is actually done is where litigation serves a purpose beyond compensation. It forces accountability. [Michael Haggard, Aquatic Attorneys](#) have handled cases that set precedents for what constitutes reasonable care in pool and spa settings. Their work in swimming pool litigation has helped push the industry toward better standards, even when regulators move slowly.

Suction Entrapment: A Hidden Danger

Suction entrapment is one of those hazards that sounds almost unbelievable until you see the physics of it. A child's hair or clothing gets pulled against an uncovered drain, and the pump can generate enough force to hold them underwater even as adults try to pull them free. The CPSC has documented hundreds of incidents, and the actual number is likely higher because many go unreported. The Virginia Graeme Baker Act was named for a seven-year-old girl who died in exactly that way, and it set mandatory standards for public pools. But compliance is not automatic. It requires property owners to retrofit older pools, install safety vacuum release systems, and replace drain covers on a schedule. Many do not, and the consequences are fatal.

In the litigation I have followed, the most effective plaintiff firms do not just file a complaint and wait for discovery. They send investigators to the scene immediately, preserve physical evidence, and often work with engineers who can reconstruct exactly what happened. The Aquatic Safety Group, which provides training and resources on entrapment prevention, has been a valuable partner for many attorneys in this field. But the legal work itself requires a deep understanding of pump systems, pool hydraulics, and the history of industry standards. That is not something a general personal injury lawyer picks up in a weekend seminar. It is the kind of knowledge built over years of handling these specific types of cases.

Beyond Pools: Cruise Ships, Boating Accidents, and Negligent Security

Aquatic injuries are not limited to swimming pools. Cruise ships are floating resorts with pools, spas, and water slides, but they operate under maritime law, which has different rules about jurisdiction, liability limits, and the time window for filing a claim. I have seen families miss the deadline to sue a cruise line because they did not realize the ticket contract required notice within six months. Boating accidents bring their own complications, including federal admiralty jurisdiction and the possibility of limiting liability to the value of the boat after the incident. Negligent security claims arise when a hotel, apartment complex, or water park fails to protect guests from foreseeable harm - whether that is a lack of lifeguards, broken gates, or inadequate lighting near a pool area after dark.

Each of these scenarios demands a firm that can move between state and federal court, understand multiple regulatory schemes, and explain complex facts to a jury. The Haggard Law Firm has been doing this since 1972, and the team behind Michael Haggard, Aquatic Attorneys brings that institutional knowledge to every case. They are based in Coral Gables, but their work takes them across the country because aquatic injuries do not respect state lines.

Why Prevention and Litigation Go Hand in Hand

Some people assume that lawyers who handle wrongful death cases are only interested in large verdicts. That has not been my experience when I talk to the attorneys at Aquatic Attorneys. They are deeply involved in drowning prevention efforts, working with organizations that promote pool safety and educate families about the risks. They understand that a lawsuit is a poor substitute for a living child. But they also know that litigation is sometimes the only way to force a change in behavior from a company that has ignored safety for years.

The money from a settlement or verdict does more than compensate a family for their loss. It sends a message to the industry that cutting corners on safety has real consequences. It pays for expert testimony that gets entered into the public record. And it provides the resources families need to rebuild their lives after a catastrophic injury or death. That is the hard reality of this area of law. It is not about winning for the sake of winning. It is about making sure that the next family does not have to go through the same thing.

What to Look for in an Aquatic Injury Attorney

If you are reading this because you or someone you know has been affected by an aquatic injury, the most important step is finding counsel that handles these cases regularly. Ask about their experience with suction entrapment, the Virginia Graeme Baker Act, and the CPSC's guidance on pool safety. Ask whether they have worked with the Aquatic Safety Group or similar organizations. Ask how many drowning cases they have taken to trial, not just settled. And make sure they have the resources to investigate a scene immediately, because evidence disappears fast.

The Haggard Law Firm and its Aquatic Attorneys practice have been a consistent presence in this field for decades. Their track record in swimming pool litigation and wrongful death cases speaks for itself. But more than that, they understand that behind every case file is a family looking for answers and a measure of justice. That is what keeps them going, and it is why they remain one of the most respected names in this difficult area of law.