

# Make a splash with swimming pool safety

By Kim Dennis

It is summer, the weather is finally warm and swimming pools are a popular family recreation spot to cool off. For many public entities, public swimming and wading pools provide a venue for the community to access facilities and aquatic programs. These pools bring many benefits to the community; they also carry public safety risks and must be operated safely.

What are the key hazards?

Public swimming pools present a number of hazards that may contribute to the risk of injury, illness, or death. These hazards include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Too many people in the pool at one time.
- Children and adults with varying levels of swimming experience.
- Design or construction of the pool obstructing the line of sight of supervisors and lifeguards.
- Slips, trips, and falls from wet surfaces, sloped surfaces, uneven pathways, people running, and obstacles around the pool.
- Hazardous pool chemicals located on site.
- For outdoor pools, unsecured objects such as rescue equipment, umbrellas, shades, and furniture which can become projectiles during high winds.
- Communicable diseases and waterborne pathogens.

What do I need to do?

The health and safety risks of operating a public swimming pool can be managed by taking precautions, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide supervision of patrons using the pool with adequately trained lifeguards, supervisors and first aid officers.
- Require that children or people with limited swimming competency be accompanied by competent adults who provide supervision.
- Monitor for and prohibit activities such as diving and running.
- Provide information or signage about pool safety (e.g., accompanying adults to supervise their children, prohibited activities, pool depth).

- Manage infection risks (e.g., by following recommended pool water quality and operational guidelines, by providing people using the pool with information about good hygiene).
- Prohibit the use of inflatables and floats in the water.
- The surface surrounding the pool should be a non-slip surface, and there should be sufficient lighting and drainage.
- For outdoor pools, remove or adequately secure objects such as furniture, umbrellas, and signage to prevent them from becoming projectiles during high winds or storms.
- Store hazardous chemicals in a secure place, ensure chemicals are properly labeled, and provide proper personal protective equipment to staff managing chemicals.
- Have an emergency plan in place, and make sure your employees are properly trained and can administer an advanced level of first aid and resuscitation.

With proper training, maintenance and care, pools can be a source of good, safe family fun. Limit liability by making swimmers aware of the rules (see [PAR.26.01 Sample Pool Safety Rules](#)); ensuring that everyone has an enjoyable and safe experience.

As always, contact your assigned WCIA Risk Management Representative for additional information.