

Public Swimming Pool Safety Recommendations

Injury Incident Reporting

After reviewing historical pool injury/incident reports submitted to the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) by public pool operators, ODH has identified the most common areas of injury/incidents at swimming pools. These include diving boards, slides, zero entry areas, wading pools, spray grounds, and therapy pools. Starting with the 2023 swim season, ODH is providing strategies for pool operators to help reduce injuries/incidents at public swimming pools.



Deep End and Diving Boards

It is important to inspect your diving board regularly for hairline or facial cracks anywhere on the board. If a replacement is needed, ensure the new diving board is the exact same height, length, and type as the old diving board. Documentation that the diving well meets either the competitive standard or one of the recreation standards in Appendix A, must be submitted to your local health department. If the structure or length of the board changes, or is moved, a plan review application must be submitted to ODH to ensure that the safety of the diving envelope is not compromised. If your diving board needs replaced, contact ODH at BEH@odh.ohio.gov or 614-644-7438 to determine whether a review is needed.



ODH recommends that you post diving rules near the diving board so users will know how to properly use the diving boards. Check the forms section of the ODH public swimming pools webpage at odh.ohio.gov/swim for examples that you can print and use.

ODH also recommends developing a swim test for inexperienced users and those under the age 18. Criteria for passing the test could include the swimmer's endurance and ability to swim in deep water. Recommended tests include:

- Treading water while keeping your head above the water for one minute.
- Swim without stopping the entire length of the deep end.
- Jump in fully submerged, swim to the surface, return to the side of the pool, and exit the pool without assistance.

If a swim test is administered and the patron passed, ODH also recommends providing a wrist band or other visual designation to signal to lifeguards or pool management that the user can safely use the diving board/deep end.

Spray Grounds

After a young girl was injured by a high-pressure spray ground jet water feature, a new state law ([Ohio Revised Code 3749.081](#)) took effect on April 3, 2023, limiting the flow rate of water through the nozzle of a water feature to no more than 20 feet per second unless justified by the design engineer and by the fountain system manufacturer.

ODH has developed guidance for operators to use when evaluating the flow rate of water feature nozzles in fountains or other interactive water feature at public swimming pools, public spas, or special use pools. Operators should ensure that all flow meters are in good repair, and the flow rate of water feature nozzles must remain below the maximum flow set in approved plans. For example, a height of 6.21 feet of vertical flow from a nozzle has a rate of approximately 20 feet per second. Consequently, if the water exceeds 6 feet from the nozzle, the water pressure is likely to exceed 20 feet per second and be in violation of Ohio Revised Code 3749.08.

Therapy and Cold Plunge Pools

To remind patrons of the increased risk of injury when using pools that operate at a temperature that is higher or lower than the average other public swimming pools, ODH recommends (but does not require) that operators place additional signage at high temperature pools and cold-water plunge pools containing the following language.

- High Temperature: This pool has been approved to operate at a temperature greater than 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Caution: Exposure to extreme temperatures should be avoided by pregnant women; the elderly; and people with heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, or low blood pressure. Higher temperatures increase your risk for adverse health effects such as nausea, dizziness, and fainting.
- Low Temperature: Cold water basins such as plunge pools can cause adverse health outcomes as a result of the intense and sudden changes in temperature including impaired coordination, loss of control of breathing, slowed heartbeat, hypothermia, and loss of consciousness. Exposure to extreme temperatures should be avoided by pregnant women, the elderly, people with medical problems, and young children. (Reference: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [Model Aquatic Health Code](#))

More Information

For more information regarding pool operation and maintenance, visit the ODH Public Swimming Pools webpage at <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/public-swimming-pools>. The webpage provides links to Public Swimming Pool Rules, plan review documents, and worksheets that can be used to maintain water quality and service records.

Please contact your local health department with questions regarding your pool license or routine inspections. Please send plan review and other questions to ODH at BEH@odh.ohio.gov or 614-644-7438. Please call 614-644-7527 to talk with an ODH pools engineer.