



Nova Scotia Operational Guidelines for Aquatic Facilities

Reducing Risk and
Promoting Healthy Recreational Water Experiences
2014

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Public Health Branch
Environmental Health Division
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Background

A well-managed and constructed aquatic facility can be a great community asset for many reasons. The use of pools and the resulting social interaction, relaxation, and exercise produces health benefits, reduces chronic health issues, and increases well-being. Furthermore, they offer economic advantages including spin-offs from the tourism industry and employment opportunities across a variety of age groups. They can also be utilized as an emergency measures tool during times of extreme heat.¹

However, improperly built, maintained and/or misused aquatic facilities can pose serious biological, chemical, and physical health hazards. Lack of operator knowledge, expertise and the development of chlorine-tolerant microorganisms have been influential in the rise in recreational waterborne illness and injury (RWII) outbreaks in the United States and Canada. RWII associated with aquatic facilities include skin, respiratory, and gastrointestinal illnesses; impact injury; drowning and near-drowning; and organ damage or loss including the bowels, both in the pool and around the pool.

The last set of full Nova Scotia Operational Guidelines for Aquatic Facilities was published in 1987. Much advancement has been made in the aquatic industry since 1987 and this guideline is intended to bridge the information gap.

Purpose and Objective

The purpose of the Nova Scotia Operational Guidelines for Aquatic Facilities is to set minimum industry operational standards for the Nova Scotia Aquatic Industry and to provide guidance to aquatic facilities' operational Aquatic Safety Plans. It is intended to assist facility owners, operators and staff to identify facility-specific hazards, and to understand roles, responsibilities and standard operating procedures that will encourage safe effective pool operation. The overall objective is to reduce and prevent patron illness, injury, and death.

The guidelines will be the standard used by the Department of Health and Wellness in an inspection of a health hazard complaint under the authority of the Health Protection Act.

The guidelines assume that the pool is designed and constructed in accordance with accepted best practice and with national and local building, fire, and electrical codes and standards and should be used in collaboration with these other codes and standards.

These guidelines are intended to be used by all owners and operators of aquatic facilities and pools (as defined in this guideline) that serve the public and include

- those connected to hotels and motels
- campground operations
- water parks
- splash pads
- municipal pools
- other recreational pool operations that are open to the public
- apartment and condominium complexes, and any other group, residential facility, or membership organization that offers the use of pools (i.g., daycare, recreation camps)

¹ http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/health_benefits_water_exercise.html, retrieved on May 11, 2014

Background

How to use this document

Due to the variety and age of aquatic facilities in Nova Scotia and the variety of programming and features offered to the public, not all aspects of this guideline will apply to all pool operations.

Furthermore, it is understood that some pools may not be able to meet all minimum operational standards immediately. Facilities should develop a short-term and long-term plan using a risk assessment approach to upgrade facilities. Major structural changes may require a long-term plan and there may be other ways to mitigate any potential hazards until upgrades can be accomplished. Consultation with aquatic consultants and the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness is recommended.

The guideline is accompanied by an Aquatic Safety Plan template. The template is a guide only; there may be a need to hire risk assessment experts to assist in identifying pool-specific hazards. A facility may choose to use another aquatic safety template that will create a similar outcome. The goal of the chosen Aquatic Safety Plan template is to assist facility owners, operators and staff in identifying pool-specific hazards, to understand staff roles, responsibilities, and standard operating procedures to ensure safe, effective pool operation.

Owners/operators of aquatic facilities can use this guideline and an Aquatic Safety Plan template to

- develop a facility-specific Aquatic Safety Plan
- ensure that staff are appropriately educated and trained
- maintain the facility in a clean and sanitary state
- maintain the water chemistry, and the circulation and filtration systems in a manner that reduces the potential for the development and spread of disease
- ensure equipment is maintained and checks are in place to prevent physical hazards, such as suction entrapment and effective operation
- educate the facility users on their role in reducing RWII
- be prepared and respond appropriately to adverse incidents including emergencies that may affect the health of facility users and the surrounding community



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