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Memorandum

From: Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Date: May 10, 2021

Subject: Safety Standards for Public and Semi-Public Swimming Pools

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is providing guidance for the operation of public and semi-public¹ indoor and outdoor swimming, wading, and special purpose pools (including but not limited to hot tubs and whirlpools) at recreational facilities.

All public and semi-public pools must continue to meet the requirements of 105 CMR 435.00: Minimum Standards for Swimming Pools, State Sanitary Code: (Chapter V) in addition to any stricter state or local standard developed to control the transmission of COVID-19.

This guidance applies until amended or rescinded.

General Pool Guidelines

- ❖ Pool operators should review and follow the Commonwealth's [Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#), [General Business Guidance](#) for Reopening Massachusetts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Considerations for Public Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds During COVID-19](#), and review the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [list of disinfectants meeting EPA criteria for use against the novel coronavirus](#). Pool operators should consult with venue designer in selecting a disinfectant.
- ❖ According to the CDC, there is currently no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in pools. Proper operation and maintenance (including disinfection with chlorine and bromine) of these facilities should inactivate the

¹ Pursuant to 105 CMR 435.00 a Semi-Public Pool means a swimming, wading or special purpose pool on the premises of, or used in connection with a hotel, motel, trailer court, apartment house, condominium, country club, youth club, school, camp, or similar establishment where the primary purpose of the establishment is not the operation of the swimming facilities, and where admission to the use of the pool is included in the fee or consideration paid or given for the primary use of the premises. Semi-public pool shall also mean a pool constructed and maintained by groups for the purposes of providing bathing facilities for members and guests only.

virus in the water. Criteria for maintaining proper water chemistry, pursuant to 105 CMR 435.00, is noted in the section: *Maintaining Chemical Standards and Turnover*.

- ❖ The temporary shutdown or reduced operation of a building and reductions in normal water use can create hazards for returning occupants; these hazards can include mold and *Legionella*. After a prolonged shutdown, building owners and employers should ensure that their building does not have mold and that the water system is safe to use to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease. Guidance on how to do this is available from the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>.

Social Distancing

- ❖ Recreational activities, including swimming and wading, and use of other areas of a pool facility such as deck areas, bathrooms, etc should be conducted with adherence to social distancing recommendations of 6 feet between individuals and the proper use of face coverings while outside of the water in public settings. Organized swimming programs should ensure compliance with the [*Workplace Safety and Reopening Standards for Businesses and Other Entities Providing Youth and Adult Amateur Sports Activities*](#).
- ❖ Swimming lessons that require contact are allowed. Prolonged close contact should be minimized to the extent it is possible and safe to do so.
- ❖ Face coverings are required while indoors, except where an individual is unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability. Face coverings are only required outside in the pool area when it is not possible to socially distance. Face coverings should not be worn while in the water (diving masks, goggles, and snorkels may be worn)
- ❖ Pool operators, taking into consideration bather load, any building occupancy limits, and social distancing on deck and other areas should manage capacity to accommodate social distancing to the greatest extent possible, such as setting a maximum number of individuals that can be in a pool facility or pool area at one time. This number should not exceed 50% of existing facility capacity.
- ❖ Effective on August 1, 2021, hot tubs and whirlpools may open with adherence to social distancing of 6 feet between individuals.
- ❖ Locker rooms, showers, and changing areas are limited to 50% capacity.
- ❖ Consider using one-way signs on walkways and pool deck or visual guidelines for maintaining 6 feet distance in all restroom facilities to support social distancing and control flow of traffic.
- ❖ Facilities should space pool deck furniture on premises to maintain social distancing.
- ❖ Exceptions to the social distancing guidance include:
 - Anyone rescuing a distressed swimmer, providing first aid, or performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, with or without an automated external defibrillator.
 - Individuals in the process of evacuating an aquatic venue or entire facility due to an emergency.

- ❖ Organized activities in the pool, such as events or tournaments, must comply with the guidelines in the [*Workplace Safety and Reopening Standards for Businesses and Other Entities Providing Youth and Adult Amateur Sports Activities*](#)

General Sanitation

Pool operators should clean in accordance with CDC Guidance: Considerations for Public Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds During COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html>

- ❖ [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces at least daily.
- ❖ All handwash sinks shall be fully stocked with soap and paper towels.
- ❖ Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol shall be available to staff.
- ❖ Contactless admission/entry transactions are encouraged, where possible.

Ventilation

Operators are required to maintain the facilities in accordance with CDC's guidelines found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html>

- ❖ Ensure ventilation systems of indoor spaces operate properly.
- ❖ Increase introduction and circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to staff, patrons, or swimmers.

Signs

- ❖ Post notice to workers and attendees of important health information and relevant safety measures as outlined in the Commonwealth's [Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#)

Staff Procedures

- ❖ Staff must receive training about social distancing and general sanitation best practices.
- ❖ Staff should complete a self-assessment for symptoms and stay home if sick.
- ❖ Require workers who test positive for COVID-19 to disclose to the workplace employer for purposes of cleaning / disinfecting and contact tracing. If the employer is notified of a positive case at the workplace, the employer shall notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the workplace is located and assist the LBOH as reasonably requested to advise likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other workers may be recommended consistent with guidance and / or at the request of the LBOH.

- ❖ Require frequent handwashing by staff or the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers or disinfecting wipes to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- ❖ Log visitors with appropriate contact information and make that information available upon request by state officials, LBOHs or their authorized agents.

Maintaining Chemical Standards and Turnover

According to the CDC, there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in pools. Proper operation and maintenance (including disinfection with chlorine and bromine) of these facilities should inactivate the virus in the water. Water Chemistry testing kits used by the facility should be in accordance with 105 CMR 435.30. All swimming, wading, and special purpose pools must meet the minimum testing standards of 105 CMR 435.00. In addition to meeting the minimum standards of 105 CMR 435.00, and in order to maintain safe swimming conditions, the Department is recommending:

- ❖ Increasing the frequency of water chemistry testing during peak bather load periods.
- ❖ If electronic and automated water chemistry testing monitors are used at the facility, conduct annual calibration to ensure accuracy.
- ❖ Increasing pool shocking frequency each week during hours of pool closure.
- ❖ Ensuring swimming, wading, and special purpose pools meet the minimum turnover requirement specified in 105 CMR 435.00.
- ❖ Operators and Supervisors should close immediately for maintenance and correction if the water chemistry does not meet minimum standards. All closures, maintenance, and corrections must be documented.