

Managing risks at publicly accessible pools

Information guide for owners, operators and controllers of public swimming pools

This guide provides practical information to help prevent drowning, and manage other health and safety risks associated with publicly accessible swimming pools.

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 include hazards that increase the risk of drowning, such as:

- large bodies of water with a large number of people using it at any one time
- the presence of children and adults with varying levels of swimming experience
- the presence of personal buoyancy devices (floaties, tubes) or large water-borne inflatable devices permanently or semi-permanently located in pools for common use (slides, bouncing castles, line ropes) which may impair the vision of adults or those supervising pool activities
- design or construction of the pool obstructing the line of sight of supervisors.

Publicly accessible swimming pools may also include other hazards such as:

- slips, trips and falls from wet surfaces, sloping surfaces, uneven pathways, people running, and obstacles around the pool
- hazardous pool chemicals located on site
- unsecured objects such as rescue equipment, umbrellas, sunshades, outdoor furniture which can become projectiles during strong winds

- hazardous manual tasks such as moving and lifting furniture and large inflatable structures
- communicable diseases such as water-borne infections
- an increased risk of electric shock where water is present.

What do I need to do?

You can manage the health and safety risks of operating a public swimming pool by:

- providing supervision of patrons using the pool with adequately trained lifesavers, supervisors and first aid officers
- ensuring young people or people with limited swimming competency such as children, are accompanied by adults who provide supervision
- prohibiting and monitoring activities such as diving and running
- providing information or signage about pool safety (e.g. accompanying adults to supervise their children, prohibited activities, pool depth)
- managing infection risks (e.g. by following recommended pool water quality and operational guidelines, providing people using the pool with information about good hygiene in the water, maintaining facilities such as change rooms in a clean and hygienic condition)
- removing or prohibiting the use of permanent

or semi-permanent flotation devices when there is no supervision over their use

- restricting entry to areas of increased risk, or that require higher levels of swimming competency (e.g. slides, diving boards, deep water).

You can manage the risks of slips, trips and falls and hazardous manual tasks by ensuring the environment is well maintained, including:

- sufficient non-slip surfaces around the pool and wet areas (e.g. high visibility marking at all changes in floor level, repairing worn surfaces, step treads to have slip-resistant surfaces and to be colour contrasted)
- adequate lighting
- effective drainage
- ensuring waste and spills are promptly cleaned up
- controlling the risks of hazardous manual tasks so that pulling and lifting equipment and devices is conducted safely (e.g. using trolleys or other mechanical means).

You can manage the risks of hazardous chemicals by:

- storing and handling hazardous chemicals in a secure place to prevent unauthorised access
- ensuring that hazardous chemicals are labelled and signage is clear
- making staff aware of the relevant safety information provided by the manufacturer regarding use, handling and storage
- using cleaning products according to the manufacturer's directions
- using appropriate personal protective equipment (such as gloves and safety glasses) when handling certain chemicals.

You can manage the risks of electricity in wet environments by ensuring that:

- special requirements for swimming pool electrical installations are in place. These should include bonding metal work within the pool area, safety switch protection, and measures to prevent moisture getting into electrical equipment
- pool wiring and electrical equipment is installed and maintained by a licensed electrical contractor
- extension leads and electrical appliances are connected to a safety switch and kept well clear of wet environments.

Make sure that you have first aid and emergency situations covered by ensuring:

- you have an effective emergency plan in place, which is tested regularly
- resuscitation signage is clearly visible
- appropriate access to first aid equipment and trained first aid officers
- first aid officers are properly trained and can administer an advanced level of first aid and resuscitation (such as administering oxygen or using an automated external defibrillator)
- first aid facilities and equipment are appropriate to the size of the pool facility.

You can manage risk of projectiles by:

- removing or adequately securing objects (such as, furniture, umbrellas and signage) to prevent them from becoming projectiles during strong winds or storms.

You can manage the risks of using water-borne inflatable devices by:

- following manufacturers' instructions and operating procedures
- ensuring supervisors maintain a clear line of sight of people using the structure or within the area of the structure
- ensuring the water-borne inflatable device is secure and will avoid movement, particularly during turbulent weather (these devices can be unstable and difficult to control or anchor)
- ensuring measures are in place to prevent people from inadvertently falling off the inflatable device into the water or being caught between the device and other things (like the pool edge, ladders or ropes)
- ensuring the number of people on the device at one time is safe
- ensuring the people on the structure are a suitable physical size and have suitable ability to safely use the structure.

Why manage risks at pools?

The [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) (WHS Act) provides a framework to protect the health and safety of all workers at work. It also provides protection for the general public so that their health and safety is not placed at risk by work activities.

The WHS Act places the primary responsibility of health and safety on a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU). The PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers at the workplace, as well as other persons at a workplace. In this

context, a PCBU operating a public swimming pool must ensure the health and safety of workers and others (such as the general public), so far as is reasonably practicable.

The WHS Act also sets out the requirements for the following:

- incident notification
- consultation with workers
- issue resolution
- inspector powers and functions
- offences and penalties.

Other resources

Queensland Health

[Queensland Health](#) has further information available regarding pools, spas and other recreational water bodies.

Resources include:

- [Swimming and spa pool quality and operational guidelines](#)
- [Health swimming – good hygiene in the pool](#)
- [Help keep our pool germ-free poster](#).

