

# COVID-19 Swimming Pool Guidance



This information provides local swimming pool and spa operators with industry-specific information and recommendations to reopen and operate in a manner that reduces the spread of COVID-19. While each aquatic venue is unique in its layout, size, seating and amenities, many recommendations are universal to all. We recommend that operators consult a qualified pool professional for technical advice.

[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, hot tubs, spas, or water play areas. Proper operation and maintenance of these facilities (including disinfection with chlorine or bromine) should inactivate the virus in the water. However, there is still risk in these areas due to the potential for close contact with others, as well as touching shared surfaces. In addition, masks or face coverings should not be worn while swimming, so additional precautions are necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Under the Governor's [Executive Order 2020-114](#), all businesses or entities operating in person are required to develop a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, consistent with recommendations in [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) developed by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. The Health Department of Northwest Michigan has developed a [template](#) to create your own COVID-19 Plan. Our website has additional [guidance for businesses](#) that may also be helpful.

## Requirements

- Determine and prominently post reduced pool capacity (50% capacity for outdoor, 25% capacity for indoor)**

On June 8<sup>th</sup>, outdoor pools are allowed to reopen under [EO 2020-110](#) with 50% bather capacity. On June 10<sup>th</sup>, indoor pools are allowed to reopen with 25% bather capacity under [EO 2020-115](#). Pool operators must determine how they will maintain the 50% capacity, and how they will establish social distancing of 6 feet between groups not from the same household. Capacity for any pools, whirlpools, or spas at your facility should already be known. If it hasn't been determined or is unknown, please contact the [Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy](#) for this information.

Pool operators may also want to consider limiting the number of people allowed inside the pool area at one time, which will make it more likely for people to maintain 6-foot distancing. For the pool deck, consider removing extra chairs to ensure physical distancing can be maintained. Space chairs accordingly to help with social distancing requirements.

- Assign an attendant to monitor the pool**

Someone needs to be assigned to monitor the pool area during hours of operation. This person should monitor the number of patrons in the pool area, as well as cleaning supplies and procedures. This attendant should not be a lifeguard.

Since all pools are already required to have someone be able to respond within 15 minutes to shut the pool down due to an emergency, this person could also act as the attendant. The pool attendant could also be someone who periodically checks on the pool area. Determine what will work best for your pool. Whatever you decide, ensure clear instructions and contact information is prominently posted at the pool.

Pool operators should consider limiting how long patrons can use the pool at each visit. By limiting how long patrons can stay at the pool, more people will be able to use the pool each day and the risk for potential contact with someone positive with COVID-19 may be lessened. If possible, have a reservation system for households to sign up for blocks of time online, email, or text message to limit person to person contact. If no virtual reservation option is available pool staff can limit the number of people on a first-come, first-served basis.

## Perform frequent facility cleaning and disinfection

Establish a schedule for pool staff to disinfect high touch surfaces multiple times during the day. The CDC has guidelines for [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#). Consider providing wipes in pool areas for patrons to also wipe down high-touch areas, or a spray bottle of disinfectant (label the bottle), paper towels, and a trash can. Clean high touch surfaces including:

- Door handles, gate latches, keyless entry readers, and lock boxes
- Handrails and pool ladders
- Restrooms (door handles, faucets, sinks, toilets, towel dispensers, baby changing stations, light switches)
- Water fountains
- Emergency telephones and first aid kits
- Switches and emergency shut-off buttons on spas

## Perform regular upkeep, maintenance, and testing of pools and spas

Balanced pool chemistry, testing, maintenance, and disinfection of the pool is critical for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Be sure to maintain a minimum level of 2.0 ppm chlorine or bromine in your pool.

Performing scheduled maintenance and monitoring of your water chemistry is important, even when your pool is not being used by patrons.

## Ensure staff health and hygiene

Staffing required by state law must be maintained. Lifeguards are not allowed to monitor the capacity and regulate social distancing as it may detract from their abilities to perform their assigned job duties.

Develop an employee health screening plan. The plan should address staff symptoms, potential contact with COVID-19 positive individual, and international travel. We have developed an [Employee Screening Form](#) that employers could use to screen staff.

Have employees wear masks when feasible. See CDC Guidelines for the [use of cloth face coverings](#). Swimmers should NOT wear masks or face coverings while in pools.

Educate employees on proper handwashing. Post signs reminding staff and patrons when to wash hands. See CDC for [When and How to Wash Hands guidance](#) and also for [posters on handwashing](#).

Ensure all handwashing sinks are fully stocked with soap and single use towels.

Provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for patrons and staff.

## Recommendations

### Competition pools or pool areas used for lap swimming

One patron per lane at a time is allowable for [lap swimming or competition](#) when lanes are seven to 8 feet wide. Patrons are expected to swim in the middle of the lane to allow for maximum distance between heads (approximately 7 feet).

### Wading pools and splash pads

Wading pools and splash pads are recommended to be staffed by an attendant who is on site to monitor use. Maintain six feet of distance between people not from the same household group. Travel routes through a splash pad must allow for six feet of distance, so patrons should be encouraged to take turns moving through the splash pad.

### Special populations

It is a good idea to have special reserved hours for immunocompromised and other designated groups.

## Pool supplies and activities

Group games involving the use of balls, flotation devices, or other toys should be discouraged.

Recommend patrons to bring their own towels. Consider providing towels to patrons of facility or hotel guests only upon request.

## Pool furniture

Signs should be posted indicating that patrons should not move pool seating so that social distancing is maintained at all times. Pool operators may choose to not provide seating at this time. If choosing to use pool furniture, the areas should be marked where the furniture is to stay.

## Pool attendance log

Creating a log of who visited pool, their contact phone number, and the date and time, can help facilitate contact tracing in the event an employee or pool visitor is diagnosed with COVID-19.

## Signage

To remind patrons about social distancing requirements, posting [signage](#) by all entrances and exits of pools, locker and changing rooms, restrooms, and showers on practicing social distancing is recommended.

In addition, you may want to consider signage about potential risks. Example signage:

### COVID-19 WARNING & POOL REQUIREMENTS

- The danger of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 exists in public spaces like this pool area.
- By entering the pool and related facilities, you are taking responsibility for your own protection. It is highly recommended that you disinfect your hands and anything you touch in the pool area.
- Do not use the pool if you have been sick in the past two weeks with COVID-19, or symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms.
- Maintain at least 6 feet between you and other people who are not a part of your household.
- It is recommended to wear a cloth face covering when you are not in the swimming pool or shower.
- Minors should be supervised in pool area.

## Prevention

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan recommends the following actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Do not use the pool if you have symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or diarrhea.
- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet between people not from the same household.
- Wear a mask while in indoor public spaces, and in areas where 6 feet of distance is not able to be maintained between people.
- Keep hands away from the eyes, mouth and face.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as frequently as possible or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover coughs or sneezes (the sleeve or elbow, not hands).
- Regularly clean high-touch surfaces.

## Resources

[Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Information](#)

[State of Michigan Swimming Public Swimming Pool Guidance and Rules](#)

[USA Swimming COVID-19 Guidance](#)

[CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#)

[CDC Guidance for Aquatic Venues](#)

## Public Swimming Pool/Spa Operator Checklist

The following is a self-inspection guide for a typical public swimming pool and/or spa. Use this checklist to ensure your pool/spa is ready for an annual inspection. **If you have any questions or would like to schedule your inspection, please contact Environmental Health at 800-432-4121.**

### Safety Equipment:

**All safety equipment MUST be available in a readily accessible, well-marked location prior to approval to open.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ A one-piece, 12-foot long rescue pole with blunted ends, one end of which may have a shepherd's crook attached.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A ¼-inch diameter throwing rope as long as 1.5 times the maximum width of the pool or 50 feet, whichever is less, with one end attached to an 18-inch diameter ring buoy or rescue bag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A 24-piece first aid kit which is used primarily to treat small cuts, bruises and burns and which contains all of the following materials or their equivalent:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4 units of adhesive bandage, 1 inch by 3 inches
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2 units of 2-inch bandage compress
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1 unit of 3-inch bandage compress
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1 unit of 4-inch bandage compress
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2 units of absorbent gauze pad, 3 inches by 3 inches
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1 unit of gauze compress, 18 inches by 36 inches
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2 units of large gauze compress, 24 inches by 72 inches
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2 units of 4-inch gauze roller bandages
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2 units of triangular bandages
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1 unit of scissors
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1 unit of tweezers
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2 units of instant ice packs
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2 units of latex disposable gloves
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1 unit of adhesive plaster tape
- \_\_\_\_\_ A kit to clean up blood spills which consists of as a minimum, a pair of medical-grade disposable exam gloves and an antimicrobial hand wipe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A spine board that has a minimum of 3 ties, runners, and a head immobilizer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A telephone or other suitable means of communication for emergencies, at which a sign is posted indicating the phone numbers for emergency response agencies (i.e. 911), and the name and address of the swimming pool to assist emergency personnel in locating the facility.

## **Lifeguards:**

**Note these items are necessary if your pool is required to have lifeguards OR if you voluntarily provide lifeguards.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ A megaphone or other public address system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ One whistle per lifeguard on duty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ One rescue tube per lifeguard where the water depth is greater than 3.5 feet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ One resuscitation mask per lifeguard on duty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Valid CPR certificate and verification of completion of a lifeguard course for each lifeguard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lifeguards on duty must be dressed to respond to an emergency.

## **Signage:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Bather Capacity Limit posted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ No Lifeguard on Duty (if required) posted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ No Diving marked on pool deck where water depth is less than 5 feet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sign prohibiting the consumption of alcoholic beverages in a spa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sign warning against the use of pool or spa after the consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sign prohibiting glass, other breakable materials, and hazardous objects or materials in the pool enclosure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure that persons with communicable diseases and infectious conditions, such as a cold or open blister, are excluded from a swimming pool unless they have a doctor's note.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure people using the swimming pool take a cleansing shower before entering the pool enclosure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure that people do not spit in, or otherwise pollute, swimming pool water.

## **Pool Enclosure, including Pool Deck:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Fencing and self-closing gates/doors around pool in good repair.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pool deck surfaces clean, no trip hazards, sloped to remove surface water.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Foot spray, poolside showers, hose bibs and drinking fountain are working.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vacuum breakers provided on hose bib connections.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Depth markers, including units of measure, and "No Diving" in legible letters not less than 4 inches high clearly marked on pool walkway.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Starting blocks, if provided, located at deep end of the pool.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bath house and fixtures in good repair, with soap and hot water provided (if applicable).

## **Pool, including Water Quality:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Water must have the appropriate disinfectant and pH level. Use the following chart to determine the minimum disinfectant level for your swimming pool's pH level.

Disinfectant	pH	pH
	7.2 to 7.5	7.5 to 8.0
Bromine	2.0	2.0
Chlorine	1.0	2.0
Chlorinated cyanurate	2.0	4.0

\_\_\_\_\_ Total alkalinity of water is 80-120 ppm.

\_\_\_\_\_ Calcium hardness of water is 150-400 ppm.

\_\_\_\_\_ Water is clear and the main drains can be seen clearly from 30 feet away.

\_\_\_\_\_ Water temperature is less than 86°F for pools (unless proper warning sign is posted) and less than 104°F for spas.

\_\_\_\_\_ Swimming pool provided with two (2) or more main drains fitted with anti-entrapment covers. At a spa, one of the main outlets may be in a side wall.

\_\_\_\_\_ Gutter or skimmers are functioning (floating weirs or door weirs *must be* present for skimmers). Note that 80% of total pool circulation should be passing through skimmers and only 20% through main drains. Check this by closing the main drain valve and observing a reduction in flow rate.

\_\_\_\_\_ Water inlets working and pointed downward.

\_\_\_\_\_ Pool sides and bottom are clean.

\_\_\_\_\_ Life line in place across pool at point where water is 5 feet deep.

\_\_\_\_\_ Ladders and railings are secured.

\_\_\_\_\_ Edge of stairs and any drop off or sudden depth changes in the swimming pool are marked with a contrasting color.

## **Pump & Mechanical Room:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Pump and filters working properly (operator must be familiar with pool plumbing and backwashing procedures).

\_\_\_\_\_ Chlorinator or brominator functioning properly.

\_\_\_\_\_ Vacuum/pressure gauges on or near filter working properly.

\_\_\_\_\_ Flow meter functioning properly and flow at proper level.

\_\_\_\_\_ Direction of flow in pipes is marked with arrows.

\_\_\_\_\_ Vacuum hose is in good repair.

\_\_\_\_\_ Chlorine or bromine containers stored off the floor and in a manner that prevents accidental spillage and/or mixing with other chemicals, such as acid and soda ash.

## **Pool Operation:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Test kit complete, provided with fresh chemicals and used daily. A cyanuric acid test kit is required when using a cyanurate for chlorine stabilization. Please note that most pools using chlorine require stabilizer to be added at the beginning of the swimming season.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to continuously recirculate, filter, and disinfect swimming pool water 24 hours per day with a turnover rate of 6 hours.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Information on how to appropriately super-chlorinate, shock, or treat the water if you are notified of an unsafe water sample OR if there is a fecal, vomit or other accident in the pool.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to backwash the swimming pool and knowledge of when this is to occur.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A contingency and emergency response plan has been prepared, implemented and minimally includes information on rescues and submersions, equipment failure, injury requiring medical attention and other conditions or events that create hazard to health and safety of persons using the pool.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Operation permit displayed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A qualified person who is responsible for testing the water and for operating the water treatment equipment is *readily available* when the pool is open for use.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Operation report forms on hand to be completed daily and faxed monthly to Washtenaw County Environmental Health at 734-222-3930. Minimum information required includes disinfectant level three times daily, pH once daily and information on emergencies, accidents, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If there been any construction modifications to the pool without permits from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), please contact Washtenaw County Environmental Health as soon as possible at 734-222-3800.

**If you have any questions or would like to schedule your inspection,  
please contact Environmental Health at 800-432-4121.**

**Additional information on pools is available at:**

**[www.michigan.gov/deqpools](http://www.michigan.gov/deqpools)**