

Operating a Safe Public Swimming Pool

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and local regulatory agencies are responsible for enforcing Minnesota Rules, parts 4717.0150 to 4717.3975 (the "Pool Code"). The Pool Code lists many requirements needed to operate a safe public pool. Here are frequently asked questions about the operation of a safe public pool.

What types of establishments are required to have a certified trained operator?

The Pool Code requires that each public pool have a designated trained operator who is responsible for the direct operation of the pool whenever the pool is open for use.

What is the trained operator required to do?

The trained operator is responsible for the daily operation of the pool and must ensure that required testing is completed and records are maintained.

The trained operator, or a designated alternate trained operator, must be able to respond to emergency, unsafe and unsanitary conditions at any time the pool is open for use. In addition, the trained operator must assure that other individuals who assist with chemical monitoring and pool equipment operation are trained for those functions.

How do I get a Certified Trained Operator Certificate?

You must successfully complete a pool operator training course and pass an examination. A listing of course providers can be found at:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/pools>

Am I required to keep pool records and manuals?

Yes. A record of the public pool's operations and routine maintenance must be kept for six years. An operations manual that provides information relating to all pool equipment must be available. For every day the pool is in use, the record must contain documentation for:

1. The operating periods of recirculation pumps and filters and corresponding rate-of-flow meter readings;
2. Amounts of chemicals used, except chemicals added through an automated system;
3. Disinfectant residuals including both free and total disinfectant residuals;
4. pH readings;
5. The temperature readings of a pool with a heater;
6. Any other pool chemistry measurements taken, although not required to be recorded daily, such as alkalinity and cyanuric acid concentrations;
7. Maintenance of equipment;
8. Any malfunction of equipment; and
9. Any accidents or injuries requiring assistance from a lifeguard, attendant or emergency medical personnel.

Can the pool be closed by the health department if there is not a certified trained operator?

Yes. Failure to maintain a trained operator, alternate trained operator, operations manual, or adequate pool records may result in closure of the pool and other enforcement action from the regulatory agency.

Do I need to report accidents that happen at the pool?

Yes. All pool incidents resulting in death or serious injury that require assistance from emergency medical personnel or attention from a trained medical doctor must be reported to MDH (651-201-4500) by the end of the next working day.

When should I close the pool?

When any of the conditions below are found, you must close the pool immediately and place a sign at the entrance indicating that the pool is closed. The pool must remain closed until the condition is corrected. A pool must be closed when:

1. Lifesaving equipment as required in Minnesota Rules, part 4717.1450 are not provided (this lifesaving equipment may include, but is not limited to a ring buoy, life pole/shepherds crook, first aid kit, and spine board);
2. The water clarity issues prevent the bottom drain from being easily seen (see Minnesota Rules, part 4717.1750, subpart 7);
3. The disinfection residual specified in Minnesota Rules, part 4717.1750, subpart 3, is not met;
4. The pool has been constructed or physically altered without approval of plans as required by Minnesota Rules, part 4714.0450;
5. There is any condition that endangers the health or safety of the public. For example; filter system is not working; the drain cover is broken or missing; pool users are complaining about skin irritation, illness or unusual odors; or any other condition that indicates the pool is not operating properly.

The water is cloudy. Should I allow people to use the pool?

No. If the water is cloudy, or you can't see the bottom of the pool, close the pool immediately and identify the source of the problem.

Do I have to check the drain cover every day to be sure it is securely attached?

Yes. Operators are responsible for ensuring the pool is properly maintained, including checking the drain cover to make sure it is securely in place. The cover must be installed and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions. If the drain cover is loose, missing, or broken, close the pool immediately until it can be properly re-installed according to manufacturer's instructions.

I need to shut down the pumps to do maintenance work. Can swimmers stay in the pool while I do this?

No. Swimmers should never be in the pool unless all systems are operating properly and all chemical and safety requirements are being met. Before you allow swimmers back in the pool, you must ensure proper operation of all pool equipment, and chemical testing should be performed to ensure the water is safe for swimmers.

There is foam and a scum line around the pool. Is that normal?

No. A scum line around the edge of the pool and large amounts of foam in the pool are signs that the pool is not being properly maintained. Close the pool until proper maintenance of the pool can eliminate the problem.

Can people get sick with vomiting and diarrhea from swimming in a pool?

Yes. Outbreaks of vomiting and diarrhea can occur from contaminated water in a pool. In most cases, if the pool is being properly maintained, the chlorination and filtration system will eliminate many of the germs that can make people sick. If pool users call you to report they are ill after swimming in your pool, contact your local health department immediately.

Can people get a rash from swimming in a pool?

Yes. A skin infection can occur if the pool is not being properly maintained. The rash usually appears within a few days of swimming in contaminated water. Most rashes clear up in a few days without medical treatment. If pool users call you to report they have a rash after swimming in your pool, contact your local health department immediately.