



JULY 2010

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Alexandria Health Department
Environmental Health Division

4480 King Street, Suite 360

Alexandria, VA 22302

(703) 746-4910

www.alexandriava.gov/aquatichealth

The Pool Safety &
Sanitation Newsletter
of the Alexandria
Health Department

The Lifeline

Bathhouses



The clean and safe operation of a recreational water facility depends on well provisioned, functional bathhouses. Contracts between pool management companies and property owners typically identify which party is responsible for maintaining bathhouses, and each contract is unique to a facility. Nevertheless, while working as a lifeguard or pool operator you should strive to ensure that all aspects of your bathhouse facilities meet the requirements of Alexandria's Aquatic Health Ordinance.

Always take a proactive approach towards managing bathhouse facilities and never ignore issues that affect hygiene. In particular, make sure that you have adequate supplies of liquid soap, toilet paper, and paper towels or a mechanical means for drying hands. Pay close attention to the time of day and calendar day to insure that you have enough supplies to meet patron demands during evenings, weekends, and holidays, when property maintenance offices typically are closed.

A checklist covering the some of the most common problems observed in bathhouses during health department evaluations would ensure that:

- All toilet stalls are supplied with toilet paper
- All urinals and toilets flush properly
- All lavatory sinks and showers are functioning, clean, and sanitary
- All lavatory sinks and shower stalls have liquid soap dispensers
- All liquid soap dispensers are filled and functioning
- All pull-chains for showers so equipped are of sufficient length
- All paper towel dispensers are stocked with paper towels
- All floors are clean and sanitary
- All lighting fixtures are working properly

Items on this checklist should be verified at the daily opening and frequently throughout each period of operation. Pay particular attention to liquid soap dispensers that might visually look fine, but do not actually dispense soap.

If you are not directly responsible for taking care of bathhouse facilities, take steps to inform the responsible party about any problems as soon as you become aware of them. This can be accomplished simply by informing your supervisor of the situation. Be sure to follow up with your supervisor if a problem has not been addressed in a timely fashion.

Consider the needs of your patrons: What might not seem necessary and urgent to you as you read this newsletter is not similarly true for any patrons currently in need of toilet paper, soap, or simply a way to dry their hands!

Notices of Violation (Tickets)

The Aquatic Health Ordinance requirements have been implemented to ensure safe and sanitary recreational water facilities. Compliance with the requirements is possible by making yourself aware of those requirements and making the appropriate person aware of problems when they occur. In my personal experience, a few common violations are: providing valid original certificates, water quality parameters, and repeat violations. When these problems are not corrected, they can result in Notices of Violation (tickets), which are a hassle and can be expensive.

"The bottom line is that we are ALL in the business of public safety.."

The Aquatic Health Ordinance requires original certificates for pool operator training, lifeguard training, and CPR training. Individuals acting as a pool operator or lifeguard must possess these certificates and must be on pool premises during hours of operation. These certificates allow others to quickly identify who you are and what skill you've acquired. Just as any other job out there on the market, each job requires a specific set of skills, degrees, certificates, experience, and so on. As a pool operator and lifeguard, you must have attained these certificates and know how to swim. Flaunt your certificates and dazzle the inspector with your swimming skill!

Disinfectant and water quality parameters are the next most commonly cited violations. In addition to disinfectants such as chlorine and bromine, water quality includes pH, total alkalinity, calcium hardness, cyanuric acid, and total dissolved solids. Water quality can fluctuate frequently over the day because it is a result of many factors occurring hourly; factors ranging from the amount of people swimming in the pool to the intensity of the sunlight in that period of time. Having a water balanced pool is one of the most important duties as a pool operator because it directly influences the safety of the patrons and the long term condition of the pool. It will take full-time effort and a vigilant watch from well-trained pool operators and lifeguards to make this happen.

Another common issue is repeat violations. As a trained pool operator and lifeguard, you should know what your duty requires and how to attend to the duty. When there is a problem at the pool, it is the responsibility of the pool operator to address the problem by correcting it, or notifying the responsible person. If the Environmental Health Specialist has pointed out a problem at your pool, please be sure to alert the responsible person so that the problem can be corrected quickly.

Being aware of these common problems will dramatically improve the safety and sanitation of the facility and decrease the chances of having surprise heartache. The bottom line is that we are ALL in the business of public safety and the well-being of the patrons should be the number one priority. Thus far there have not been any waterborne illnesses and serious injuries reported. Keep up the great work everyone!