

COVID-19: Reopening Public Pools

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. Our website has additional [guidance for businesses](#) that may also be helpful.

Requirements

Determine and prominently post reduced pool capacity (50% capacity or 100 patrons, whichever is less)

Outdoor pools are allowed to reopen under [EO 2020-110](#) with 50% bather capacity. 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

Barry-Eaton District Health Department 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

[Barry-Eaton District Health Department 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](#)