

Swimming Pools



A number of premises have swimming pools which can be used by residents, visitors, employees and young persons. Whilst they can be of great benefit from a recreational and health point of view, they also pose a number of hazards that can result in slips, trips and falls, water contamination and drowning.

What the law says

There are no specific health and safety regulations governing swimming pools. However, all pool operators must comply with health and safety legislation, including Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974, which requires employers to conduct their undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, others are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to employees and others in order to decide what control measures are necessary. There are no prescriptive precautions as these need to be decided by individual operators on the basis of their particular pool. There is, however, detailed guidance available from the HSE.

Other legislation which would apply includes the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER), the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations, the Electricity at Work Regulations, and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH).

Supervision

All pools require some measure of supervision but arrangements for each location must be determined by the risk assessment.

The risk assessment undertaken at a swimming pool will need to include not only the physical hazards, but those hazards relating to swimmers and swimming-related activities.

When pool operators assess the need for supervision they will need to consider:

- local circumstances
- the pool structure and equipment
- the way the pool is used and the characteristics of those who may use it.

Pool Safety Operating Procedure

A written Pool Safety Operating Procedure (PSOP) must be prepared. This consists of the Normal Operating Plan (NOP) and the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for the pool, changing facilities and associated plant and equipment.

The staff must have access to these and they must be kept available for inspection, if required.

The NOP should set out the way a pool operates on a daily basis. It should include details of the layout, equipment, manner of use, user group characteristics and any hazards or activity-related risks.

The EAP should give specific instructions on the action to be taken, by all staff, in the event of any emergency.

Staff must be made aware of the PSOP, the NOP and the EAP, and must be trained to work in accordance with them.

Where a pool is hired by other organisations (e.g. swimming clubs), the relevant sections of the plan must be made known to them and, where necessary, training given and regular checks made to ensure compliance. Details of any documentation, training provided and checks should be recorded.

The PSOP should be regularly reviewed and revised if necessary, particularly with the installation of new equipment or after a major incident, e.g. an accident which requires hospitalisation of the injured person or a near drowning. Staff and outside organisations should be made aware when a revision has taken place.

Where the pool is part of a larger complex (e.g. a hotel, hospital or school), a senior member of management should be clearly designated as responsible for safe pool operation.

Maintenance

Regular and correct maintenance of buildings, plant and equipment is important in ensuring the health and safety of employees and pool users. The designer's (or manufacturer's) instructions should specify the preventive maintenance procedures and intervals required. They should also indicate the competence and/or qualifications for those carrying out the work.

Pool operators should ensure that inspections and tests are carried out at the specified intervals as a preventative measure, and any remedial action required promptly dealt with.

Further information

HSE publishes comprehensive guidance on managing health and safety in swimming pools to assist pool operators, and pool hirers, to put in place appropriate safety precautions. Managing health and safety in swimming pools (HSG179) is available from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg179.htm.

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