

Reopening of Public Swimming Pool and Aquatic Facilities

Public swimming pools may be open at 50% capacity, up to a total bather load of 250.

All businesses, organizations, and venues for gathering are required to develop and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in accordance with applicable guidance on the [Stay Safe Minnesota website \(staysafe.mn.gov\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov).

As of July 25, 2020, people in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces, per Executive Order 20-81. Additionally, the Executive Order requires workers to wear a face covering when working outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained. The Executive Order includes exemptions for people who are unable to wear or tolerate a face covering due to medical or mental health conditions or other reasons. There are also situations in which a face covering may be temporarily removed, such as when swimming, eating, or drinking, provided that social distancing is maintained between members of different parties. **Do not allow swimming with cloth face coverings on. Cloth face coverings can make it difficult to breathe when wet, increasing the risk of drowning.** Businesses and venues may choose to have more protective requirements than those in the Executive Order.

- More information about face covering requirements and exemptions is available on the MDH website at [Masks and face coverings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks).

All provisions of the Minnesota pool code ([Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4717](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4717/) [www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4717/] parts 4717.0150 through 4717.3975) and the Abigail Taylor Pool Safety Act ([Minnesota Statutes 144.1222, Public Pools](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.1222) [www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.1222]) must be followed.

Guidance for “before reopening” may be helpful for all swimming pool operators.

Before reopening and for pools that choose to remain closed

Secure premises to prevent access

Drowning remains a leading cause of accidental injury death in the United States. If the pool is closed, be sure all doors, gates, and windows that allow access are closed and locked.

Maintain recirculation and disinfection

All pools and spas

Maintain the pool chemistry even if the pool is not operational.

- Keep the water chemically balanced to prevent damage to surfaces and equipment by corrosive or scale-forming water. Properly balanced water will prevent biofilm and algae growth.
- Minimize the use of pool heaters. Heaters should be run for 15-20 minutes after starting circulation to ensure they are operating correctly. After that, they can be turned off until the pool is ready to be open for bathers.
- Reduce the speed of the circulation pump. Ensure there is enough water flow to keep the chemical controllers operating, and to turn the volume of water over at least once daily.
- Maintain the pool as normal. Check and balance the water chemistry, remove debris, and clean the skimmer and pump baskets no less than once a week. Continued maintenance includes brushing, vacuuming, and backwashing.

Aquatic play features

Aquatic play features or fountains such as water slides, cascading mushrooms, dumping buckets, or spray decks must be operated intermittently. Circulate water through these features several times per week for at least 30 minutes to help reduce pathogens in plumbing lines that service these features.

Seasonal pools

Clean and start the pool as normal, and follow the guidance above.

If present, leave safety covers installed to reduce the amount of debris entering the water.

Hot tubs and spas: *Legionella* concerns

Extended closures of hot tubs and spas can increase the risk of waterborne diseases such as Legionnaires' disease. *Legionella* is the organism that causes Legionnaire's Disease and Pontiac Fever. It is important to ensure hot tubs and spas are safe to use and minimize the transmission of *Legionella* and other bacteria.

See the following CDC guidance:

[Extended Hot Tub/Spa Closures \(www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/extended-hot-tub-closures.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/extended-hot-tub-closures.html)

[Operating Public Hot Tubs/Spas \(www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/operating-public-hot-tubs.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/operating-public-hot-tubs.html)

[Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html)

Planning for reopening

Capacity and distancing

The pool operator is ultimately responsible for ensuring that social distancing requirements are met. Determine user capacity based on social distancing requirements, and the facility's pool, spa deck, restroom, and locker room configurations.

Planning for reduced capacity

Public swimming pools may be open at 50% capacity, up to a total bather load of 250.

Consider the square footage needed per bather to allow for 6 feet of space for each patron (except for family groups) in the pool and on the deck at all times. Ensure that capacity allows for proper social distancing on the pool deck in the event of a fecal incident or other life-safety situation where bathers may need to exit the pool and remain on the pool deck or evacuate to another location.

- Establish a schedule with time slots for various activities, and allow sign-ups online and/or by phone.
- Consider assigning separate entries and exits, and manage the flow of users to move in one direction.
- Consider impact on programs – recreational swim, water exercise, lap swim, swim lessons, swim team practices. Develop a plan for these scenarios, as applicable to your facility.

Lobby and locker rooms

Consider staggering entry of users and establish time limits to maximize the number of users while maintaining capacity limits.

- Establish safe places for guests to wait for entry.
- Encourage re-arranging locker rooms or putting in place other physical barriers or markings to encourage social distancing.
- Install sanitizing stations at the entrance to your facility and at key locations throughout the facility where customers are likely to contact shared equipment. If hand sanitizer is provided, ensure it contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Enforce the requirements for user sanitation and safety, including showering, as stated in [Minnesota Rule 4717.1650: User Sanitation and Safety \(www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4717.1650/\)](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4717.1650/).
- Do not allow guests to congregate while waiting for access. Consider using floor markings, outdoor distancing, waiting in cars, or other techniques to maintain adequate separation.

Pool deck and bodies of water

Locate deck furniture in accordance with distancing requirements.

- Consider marking furniture locations.

Limit the number of people on play features to avoid crowding.

If diving boards, slides, or other aquatic play features are used, consider marking off the proper distance for people standing in line.

Lap swim

During lap swim, consider proper distance between swimmers.

- One patron per lane at a time is recommended for recreational lap swimming. Patrons should swim in the middle of the lane to allow for maximum distance between their heads.
- More than one swimmer per lane may be allowed for competitive swim practice, if a facility's COVID-19 Preparedness Plan includes a diagram of proposed lane configurations and a description of how social distancing requirements will be met.

Staffing

Ensure adequate staffing to accommodate modifications to the operation, including altered hours of operation and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols. Train all staff on new procedures and expectations.

Each facility must have a designated person on site to ensure that guidelines and regulations are followed. A facility may appoint an attendant or other staff member to perform these duties, as long as the facility is otherwise properly staffed. **A lifeguard while on lifeguard duty may not perform duties of the attendant** or be given additional duties that distract from the responsibilities of lifeguarding.

Plan employee schedules so that cohort groups work together, when practical. For example, Aaden, Javier, and Ann always work together; Hodan, Dawb, and Peter always work together. However, members of one team never work with another team. Scheduling in teams can help to reduce exposures within the staff.

For pools without lifeguards, make a plan to determine how mandated capacity limits and access will be monitored. Options may include using a screener at the pool entrance, or using a video monitoring system.

Implement sick leave (time off) policies and practices for staff that are flexible and non-punitive.

Lifeguards and Trained Pool Operator Certification

Certification courses for lifeguards and trained pool operators may be held. Distance learning should be optimized, and in-person class sizes are restricted to those allowed by current Executive Orders.

Health screening must be done before each class, and those experiencing symptoms should be excluded.

For in-person lifeguard certification courses, each instructor and student should have their own manikin, educational equipment, and disposable supplies, as applicable. Manikins and shared instruction materials must be disinfected between each use. Follow manufacturers' guidance for manikin cleaning and disinfection.

Every effort should be made to maintain physical distancing except for aspects of training that can only be performed within closer distances and/or contact. The Red Cross has developed social distancing guidance for resuscitation education and "Interim Virtual Skills Training" for portions of its lifeguarding courses. Facilities with access to this material are encouraged to use it when planning and implementing courses.

Signage

Identify and post additional signage, including for:

- Capacity and social distancing
- Masks and face coverings
- Reminders to wash hands and practice good personal hygiene
- Location of handwashing and sanitizing stations
- Instructions on how to identify symptoms of COVID-19
- Information about being excluded if people or household members are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19

Emergency protocols and other safety considerations

Evaluate COVID-19 impact on rescue protocol:

- Ensure adequate supply and reliable source of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Evaluate and revise CPR protocol as needed (example: acquire bag valve mask to eliminate the need for mouth to mouth resuscitation).
- Have staff treat any emergency victim as COVID-19 positive until otherwise determined.

Cleaning and disinfecting the facility

In addition to regular maintenance, establish a cleaning protocol that includes:

- Defined times of day when cleaning and disinfection will occur (examples include before opening, between shifts, after closing).
- Defined areas and equipment that need to be cleaned (for example: frequently touched surfaces such as ladders and hand rails, diving equipment, tables, doorknobs, switches, deck furniture, drinking fountains, emergency phones, toilets, faucets, sinks).
 - Discourage people from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect, or ones that are meant to come in contact with the face (for example, goggles, nose clips, and snorkels).
 - Discourage people from sharing equipment and toys that are not part of their household.
 - Ensure adequate equipment for patrons and swimmers, such as kick boards and pool noodles, to minimize sharing to the extent possible, or limiting use of equipment by one group of users at a time and cleaning and disinfecting between uses.
- For indoor pools, establish a cleaning protocol that addresses the HVAC system.
- Do not allow chemicals used to enter the pool water that are used to clean the decks, furniture, or other equipment.

See the following CDC guidance:

[Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html).

Children and swimming lessons

Modify the number of swimmers allowed in swim classes, according to limits on capacity.

Require that a parent or guardian from the same household remain in the water for lessons that require hands-on assistance for beginning swimmers.

Communicating expectations

Prepare your staff and community for your anticipated new operating procedures.

Notify customers of new expectations, Preparedness Plan, and restrictions in advance, and the need to cooperate for the pool to remain open.

Professional guidance

Contact your swimming pool maintenance provider or local sanitarian / health inspector if you have questions. [State and Local Environmental Health Delegated Agencies \(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/license/delegation.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/license/delegation.html).

After opening

Water chemistry and maintenance

Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (with chlorine or bromine) of swimming pools should kill the virus that causes COVID-19. Maintain the disinfection residuals required in the Minnesota pool code: [Minnesota Rule 4717.1750: Pool Water Condition \(www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4717.1750/\)](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4717.1750/).

Employee COVID-19 screening

Have a protocol to check employee health such as conducting employee health screening of all employees at the beginning of each shift.

- You may opt to conduct temperature screening if it can be done with proper social distancing, protection, and hygiene protocols. However, temperature screening is not required.
- Consider using the [Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).

Instruct employees who are sick to stay home.

- Follow the MDH guidelines for [COVID-19 and When to Return to Work \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf).

Have a protocol to address employees who begin showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at work.

Train and remind employees of required hand hygiene practices, including handwashing procedure and frequency, and COVID-19 precautions when reopening.

Customer screening

It is recommended that you screen all customers and visitors before allowing them to enter your business.

You may opt to conduct temperature screening if it can be done with proper social distancing, protection, and hygiene protocols. However, temperature screening is not required.

Consider using the [Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).

Surface cleaning and disinfection

Cleaning hard (non-porous) surfaces

If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water before disinfection.

Use U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 \(www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2\)](http://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2) to thoroughly clean and disinfect the entire facility, especially if it has been closed.

Focus on high-contact surfaces (e.g., tables, doorknobs, light switches, faucets, point-of-sale systems, keyboards, telephones) that would be touched by both employees and guests.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. For example, concentrations, application method, contact time, and the use of personal protective equipment. Do not mix them together.

Cleaning soft (porous) surfaces and laundry

For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floors, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.

For items that can be laundered such as towels, follow the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely. Otherwise, use products that are EPA-approved and suitable for porous surfaces:

[List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 \(www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2\)](http://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2).

Cleaning electronics

For electronics such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATMs, remove visible contamination if present. Clean and disinfect according to manufacturer's recommendations. Consider using wipeable covers for these items, if possible.

If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry the surfaces thoroughly to avoid damage to the equipment.

Additional Resources

Visit the CDC website for additional guidance about prevention of COVID-19 and public aquatics facilities: [Considerations for Public Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds During COVID-19 \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html).



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