

KCC Health and Safety Procedure

Swimming Pool Normal Operating Procedure



Introduction

The purpose of this procedure is to provide further detail on the health and safety working arrangements set out within the HSS062 Swimming Pool Management Standard to ensure that users experience a safe, clean, warm and friendly pool environment. It provides details of all aspects of pool supervision and duties. In addition to outlining processes relating to pool supervision, it includes rules, hazards and general information relating to the pool facilities. The Normal Operating Procedures and Emergency Action Plan will be referred throughout this document as NOP and EAP.

The NOP outlines the day-to-day operational procedures for the pool. These procedures also set out the arrangements for users' safety and should be followed by whoever is responsible for any group or persons using the pool or hydrotherapy pool.

The EAP outlines what emergency action to take, and who assumes leadership, in the event of foreseeable emergency situations arising.

This procedure must be supplemented by site-specific information as follows:

- Appendix 1: description of pool(s) including dimensions, depths, features, key hazards and risks, restrictions etc.
- Appendix 2: plan(s) of the pool(s) including lifeguard stations, lifeguard rotation, pool alarm point(s), position of rescue equipment, location of first aid equipment etc.
- Appendix 3: site-specific poolside rules e.g. bather.
- Appendix 4: maximum bather loads/lifeguard requirements for various sessions including emergency action plan (EAP), poolside rules/procedures, HSE (HSG179 4th edition) health and safety in swimming pools guidance.

Further information on the content of these appendices is contained within the relevant sections of this procedure.

KCC responsibilities

School Leaders and Service Managers (or a nominated manager/supervisor) are responsible for ensuring all staff are made fully aware of this procedure and how to implement it prior to commencing their poolside duties. Also ensuring there are sufficient resources on shift to enable full compliance with this procedure.

Pool staff/teachers/service staff are responsible for supervising the operation of the pool(s) in accordance with this procedure and other key tasks are outlined in this procedure.

Process

3.1 Pool details

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A description of the pool(s) within the school/service is included in Appendix 1. This will outline details of the pool(s) including numbers, dimensions, depths and any particular features including booms and floating floors.

Any associated key risks and particular restrictions to these areas e.g. access, will be detailed in the description. Further general details relating to pool features are included later in this procedure. Plan(s) of the pool(s) will be included in Appendix 2. These will show all lifeguard stations, pool alarm point(s), observation chairs, observation zones, disabled hoists and other significant features. These plans (or separate plans included in Appendix 2) will also show the positions of rescue equipment.

3.2 Poolside rescue equipment

There will be a range of equipment on poolside for use in rescuing swimmers in difficulty. This equipment will be checked before the pool is used to ensure it is in its correct position and is fit for use. This will be recorded on the pool manager's daily check sheet (or Swimming Pool Technical Operator/Onsite Designated Supervisor if there isn't a pool manager).

All pool staff must ensure they are familiar with the emergency rescue equipment, where it is situated and how to operate it prior to undertaking poolside duties. This equipment should remain in place until required for a rescue and will not be carried around the poolside; particularly reach poles that have potential for causing an accident if not handled correctly. The location of this equipment is shown in Appendix 2.

3.3 Poolside panic alarms

The locations of static poolside alarm points are detailed in Appendix 2. There are two different types of alarm on poolside, which, if activated, require action from the staff on poolside duty. These are the pool and fire alarms. Action to be taken on hearing these alarms will be outlined in the pool Emergency Action plan (EAP). All staff will receive training on the use of the alarms as part of their induction. The Pool Manager (or Swimming Pool Technical Operator/Onsite Designated Supervisor) will test pool alarm(s) daily and record on the pool manager's daily check sheet.

3.4 First aid rooms and supplies

The Swimming Pool Technical Operator/Onsite Designated Supervisor, therapists, teachers, adults other than a teacher and other KCC staff must be aware of the location of the first aid room and their contents before undertaking poolside duties. The first aid room(s) must be kept clean at all times. First aid boxes will be located in various areas of the school or service including the first aid room, and these locations will be listed in Appendix 2. Checks of first aid boxes will be undertaken by a nominated member of staff to ensure sufficient stock is present.

3.5 Training: pool staff

Appropriate training must be undertaken for the management of pool operations e.g. Pool Operators, Supervisors, Therapists along with Teachers and service staff should include the pool safe operating procedures (NOPs) and EAPs). The nominated Swimming Pool Technical Operator must complete a 3-day pool plant operator's training course every 3 years (in the use and operation of pool operations, including hydro pool, if appropriate). The training course will include water testing, disinfection, temperature control, and management practices.

Training: Lifeguard

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The National Pool Lifeguard Qualification course is a minimum of 36 hours, followed by a practical assessment on swimming pool theory, water safety and how to spot potential hazards. The course will teach practical skills of lifeguarding, such as water rescue, casualty recovery, CPR and first aid.

3.7 Pool staff: key tasks/responsibilities

Key tasks of the pool staff whilst on duty include:

- Working as part of a team to ensure the safe supervision of the pool, communicating as necessary using appropriate whistle, hand signals or speech.
- Maintaining a concentrated observation of the pool and its bathers to anticipate any problems before they occur and identify any emergency quickly. It should be noted that some bathers in difficulty might shout, and splash whilst others give little indication of a problem but simply sink below the water. Concentrated vigilance is needed to detect genuine emergencies.
- Carrying out rescues and initiating other emergency action as required.
- Carrying out initial first aid to a bather in the event of an injury or any other emergency.
- Ensuring that all bathers are behaving in an orderly manner.
- Ensuring all poolside emergency equipment and first aid equipment are present and free from defects.

3.8 Poolside rules for pool staff

Any site-specific staff rules e.g. public swimming pools, including those required for each lifeguard position if applicable, will be outlined in Appendix 3, however, the following rules apply to all pools:

- Staff must not stand together talking on poolside unless it is necessary and is relevant to the task. This particularly applies during a rotation or changeover
- Drinking is permitted on poolside from plastic drinking bottles only - eating is not permitted on poolside.
- Equipment should be stored after use e.g. inflatables, swimming equipment, pool reach poles.

3.9 Communication on poolside

The method of communication using a whistle is as follows:

- 1 whistle blast – attracts the attention of the pool users.
- 2 whistle blasts – attracts the attention of other pool staff.
- 3 whistle blasts – indicates that the lifeguard is about to take emergency action.
- 1 long whistle blast – attracts the attention of the pool users to prepare for an evacuation.

Whistles will be used sparingly and will be followed by relevant verbal or visual instruction, e.g. hand signals. Consideration will be given, where possible, to the timeliness of the whistle in relation to the activities being carried out to ensure users e.g. divers are not unduly distracted.

3.10 Potential risk factors

A few hazards exist in swimming pools and therefore pool staff must be alert and vigilant when on duty. Hazards may generally be divided into 4 categories:

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- People hazards - those that are created by the bathers in the pool.
- Activity hazards - those relating to the way activities are undertaken.
- Lifeguard hazards - those created by staff in the building.
- Physical hazards - those relating to the design and structure of the pool.

The following have been factors in serious injuries and fatalities in swimming pools in the UK:

- Prior health problems e.g. asthma, epilepsy.
- Youth and inexperience (half of those who drown are 15 or under).
- Alcohol, drugs or food consumed before swimming.
- Unauthorised access to pools intended to be out of use.
- Weak or non-swimmers straying out of their depth.
- Diving into insufficient depth of water (leading to concussion or injury to head, neck or spine).
- Unruly behaviour and misuse of equipment.
- Unclear pool water, preventing casualties from being seen.
- Absence of, or inadequate response, by pool staff in an emergency.

People hazards - wherever possible, it is desirable to observe bathers before they enter the water. This can identify users who may be considered a particular risk:

- Bathers in poor health.
- The young.
- Those who appear nervous.
- Children with disabilities or special needs.

Once bathers have entered the pool, it becomes much more difficult to spot potential problems. Those who need to be carefully observed, in addition to the above, include:

- Non or weak swimmers.
- Swimmers wearing armbands or using other buoyancy aids including floats, inflatables etc.
- Show-offs or boisterous swimmers.

Activity hazards - pool staff must be aware that accidents can happen because of seemingly harmless pool games or high-spirited activity. In certain cases, pool staff will use their skill and judgement to change the activity pattern, thus reducing the risk. Certain activities must be stopped: acrobatics, bombing, bullying, diving (unless in designated areas), fighting, misuse of equipment, pushing, running and tag games.

Lifeguard hazards - Lifeguards should act as role models to bathers, especially the younger users of the pool. Therefore, the way pool staff behave on poolside can have a significant effect on the standards of bather behaviour.

The positioning of the pool staff can seriously affect their capability to observe the water and may affect their ability to remain vigilant. Staff must therefore remain near their designated position, and should not, unless necessary, talk to other lifeguards supervising the pool, and will not leave their position unless cover is available.

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Physical pool hazards - site specific hazards, which have been identified following risk assessment, will be listed in Appendix 1, and on the pool plan e.g. blind spots and areas affected by glare. Certain hazards, however, may be common to a number of pools and these include:

- Exits from changing rooms leading directly onto poolside adjacent to deep water areas.
- Entrapment dangers from inlets, outlets, and other grills.
- Diving pools and boards.
- Awareness of pool water depths in different areas.

Chemical contamination hazards

All chemicals generating chlorine on contact with water need to be kept cool with temperatures not exceeding 30 degrees C in closed containers away from damp and contamination by organic materials e.g. grease. Storage should be weather-tight and in a well-ventilated place away from the building.

3.11 General poolside rules for bathers

It is essential that the behaviour of pupils or service users do not detract from the enjoyment of others or represent a risk. Notices will be displayed around the poolside to outline rules to users. Specific safety signs e.g. depth signs and various “do not” signs will be necessary. Pool staff will also communicate rules verbally to bathers as necessary. The following are general poolside rules and apply to all pools, should any additional site-specific rules apply, these will be included in Appendix 3:

- No acrobatics in or around the poolside.
- No bombing - this can be dangerous to other bathers.
- No diving - varying water depths make it dangerous to dive, except in organised sessions in the diving pool
- No ducking - this is dangerous as it can cause panic and alarm.
- No face masks, flippers, snorkels, or swim paddles. These are inappropriate as glass can be broken, flippers and paddles have sharp edges and can cut other bathers.
- No food or drink on poolside.
- No petting - this can be embarrassing to other bathers.
- No prams or pushchairs on poolside.
- No photography - do not allow people to film or take photography either from the poolside or the balcony unless prior permission has been granted from the School Leader or Service Manager as well as the Pool Manager.
- Recognised swimwear must be always worn - T-shirts may be allowed if agreed beforehand. There may be a need for sensitivity to the religious and cultural needs of some ethnic groups.
- No running - this is dangerous as the floor is wet and therefore is likely to present a slip hazard.
- No shouting or unnecessary distracting of the pool staff.

3.12 Maximum bather loads/lifeguard ratios

Maximum bather loads will be determined following a risk assessment – see the HSE (HSG179 4th edition) health and safety in swimming pools for guidance.

When determining the bather loads and numbers of staff available to supervise/lifeguard, consideration will be given to the various sessions programmed e.g. swimming lessons and the degree of supervision required for each and not just to the pool size. In addition, the maximum

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load may be influenced by the type of bather e.g. large numbers of children may require more supervision than the same number of adult bathers.

The maximum bather loads for the pool(s) within the school or service are shown in Appendix 4, along with the lifeguard requirements for various sessions.

3.13 Poolside positions

Lifeguard stations are shown on the plan in Appendix 2.

3.14 Controlling access onto poolside

Access to poolside when the pool is not in use will be prevented using physical barriers or supervision. Particular care will be taken when pool covers are in use. Any site-specific controls to prevent access to pool areas will be outlined in Appendix 1.

3.15 Pool water quality

Pool water testing will be carried out by nominated trained staff to ensure the quality of the water is within parameters recommended by the Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group. Any irregularities in the results will be reported immediately to the technical staff or other designated swimming pool maintenance manager who can then take appropriate action. These tests will be recorded on the Pool Operator's daily check sheet and records retained onsite.

3.16 Accidents, incidents and near misses

Due to the nature of activities taking place within the school or service, injuries, harm or near misses may occur to either employees or 3rd parties. The majority of these will be minor accidents and may be treated on site without referring the person to hospital. For minor accidents treatment will be given at either the scene of the accident or in a first aid room. All accidents, incidents and near misses will be recorded on KCC's online HS157 reporting form and those reportable to the HSE will be recorded on form F2508 Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrence forms (RIDDOR). The accident/incident may require investigation using KCC's accident/investigation form (HS160).

Appendices

- Appendix 1: description of pool(s).
- Appendix 2: plan(s) of the pool(s).
- Appendix 3: site specific rules.
- Appendix 4: maximum bather loads, lifeguard requirements, EAP, poolside rules and procedures, HSE (HSG179 4th edition) health and safety in swimming pools guidance.

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