COVID-19 Guidance for Public Swimming Pools and Spas

June 8, 2020

BACKGROUND

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Yolo County issued an initial Health Officer Order to Shelter in Place that took effect March 18, 2020. Within this Order, activities such as using public swimming pools and spas were restricted primarily because gatherings are not allowed. Yolo County Environmental Health (YCEH), the County agency responsible for regulating public swimming pools and spas within Yolo County, advised all pool owners and operators to cease use of public pools and spas.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in pools, hot tubs, spas, or water play areas. Proper operation and maintenance (including disinfection with chlorine or bromine) of these facilities should inactivate the virus in the water.

The State of California has recently released new guidance for industries such as fitness facilities, hotels, and campgrounds/RV parks which provides recommendations for public swimming pool facilities. **The effective date for the implementation of these guidelines is June 12, 2020**.

Yolo County will allow all public swimming pool facilities to reopen effective June 12, 2020 as long as the protocols in this guidance document are followed. This is in addition to any industry-specific guidance issued by the State of California. **Per State of California guidance, saunas, spas and hot tubs should remain closed.**

PROTOCOLS
The following protocols are required for resuming use of recreational health facilities such as public swimming pools:

- **Each facility must file a Social/Physical Distancing and Sanitation Protocol with YCEH prior to resuming use of the facilities.** A copy of this Protocol is attached.
- Employees and pool users are required to stay home if they are sick.
- Change the deck layout and other areas surrounding the pool to ensure that the standing and seating areas can support physical distancing requirements. This may require the removal of lounge chairs or taping off of areas to discourage use. When possible, limit guest/member use by requiring a reservation for pool use.
- Provide physical and visual cues and signs to ensure staff and swimmers stay at least six feet apart from one another, both in and out of the water.
- Designated employees should frequently monitor the swimming pool area to ensure physical distancing is being maintained by pool users.

- If applicable, ensure that lifeguards who are actively lifeguarding are not also expected to monitor handwashing, use of cloth face coverings, or physical distancing. Assign this monitoring responsibility to another staff member.
- Maintain proper disinfectant levels and pH (Refer to Table 1 below). Water chemistry (disinfectant residual and pH) must be checked a **minimum of twice per day** and recorded on a written log. Water chemistry should be checked more frequently throughout the day if facility is experiencing a high volume of users.

Table A: Required Levels for Disinfectant and pH for Public Swimming Pools

	Minimum free chlorine level	Maximum cyanuric acid level	Maximum free chlorine	Required pH range
Swimming pool using chlorine	1.5 ppm	N/A	10 ppm	7.2 to 7.8
Swimming pool with cyanuric acid	2.0 ppm	100 ppm	10 ppm	7.2 to 7.8
Spa/Wading pool using chlorine	3.0 ppm	N/A	10 ppm	7.2 to 7.8
Spa/Wading pool with cyanuric acid	3.5 ppm	100 ppm	10 ppm	7.2 to 7.8

- Follow CDC's Fecal Incidence Response Recommendations in the event of a fecal incident.
- When not in the water and social distancing cannot be maintained, everyone must wear a face covering pursuant to the Yolo County Health Order. Face coverings should not be worn while swimming as breathing can be restricted.
- Make available to all employees and guests soap and water for handwashing and/or provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Discourage pool users from sharing equipment (i.e. googles, pool noodles or other floatation equipment).
- For indoor aquatic venues, introduce and circulate outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to staff, patrons, or swimmers.

Communal Restrooms and Showers
- Only allow shower and locker room use if partitions are in place or signs have been posted to specify physical distancing requirements. If partitions or proper distancing are not possible, these facilities should remain closed.
- Shared restroom facilities and locker rooms should be cleaned regularly throughout the day using EPA-registered disinfectants. High-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, doorknobs, and light switches must be frequently cleaned and disinfected.
- Ensure that restrooms are stocked at all times with soap, paper towels and hand sanitizer. If possible, install hands-free devices such as motion sensor sink faucets, soap, paper towel, and hand sanitizer dispensers.

Sanitization and Disinfection
- Implement rigorous daily cleaning protocols for all areas, including restrooms, handrails, door/gate handles, tables and pool furniture such as deck chairs. Refer to CDC's Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities.

- Frequently clean and sanitize, in accordance with CDC and EPA guidelines, all high-traffic and high-touch areas.
- Ensure cleaning procedures following a known or potential COVID-19 exposure in a facility comply with CDC recommendations.
- When cleaning, follow appropriate safety guidelines discussed on the chemical's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) including the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves of eye protection. Ensure all chemicals are labeled and kept in closed containers, secured safely away from children and any food.
- Set up a system so that furniture and equipment (e.g., lounge chairs) that needs to be cleaned and disinfected is kept separate from furniture that has already been cleaned and disinfected. Label containers for used equipment that has not yet been cleaned and disinfected and containers for cleaned and disinfected equipment.
- Encourage patrons to bring and use their own towels wherever possible. If the facility is providing them, launder towels according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water temperature and dry items completely. Handle towels with disposable gloves and minimal disturbance, i.e., do not shake them.
- Ensure that the facility has adequate equipment for patrons, such as kick boards, pool noodles, and other flotation devices, to minimize sharing wherever possible. Clean and disinfect the items after each use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the virus should be inactivated through proper disinfection and maintenance of recreational waters, individuals over the age of 65 and those with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infection are advised to use public swimming pools and spas at their own risk.

Aquatic venues should avoid activities that promote group gatherings at this time.

CONTACT

Yolo County Environmental Health (YCEH) regulates public swimming pools and spas. Please contact YCEH directly at(530) 666-8646 or ehealth@yolocounty.org.

RESOURCES

Yolo County

Yolo County Novel Coronavirus 2019 https://www.yolocounty.org/coronavirus
Yolo County Environmental Health https://www.yolocounty.org/community-services/environmental-health-services

California Department of Public Health

Guidance Documents https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx#
General COVID-19 Info https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx#

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

General COVID-19 Info https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html
Model Aquatic Health Code https://www.cdc.gov/mahc/index.html