

ILLNESS AND INJURY PREVENTION POLICY

Recommendations for Public Swimming Area Managers and Park Owners

It has been known for decades that there is some risk of disease transmission in swimming waters. While it does not appear possible to eliminate the risk of illness or injury, it is possible for citizens, facility managers, and the health department to reduce and control risk.

We recognize the recreational and fitness values of swimming and water contact activities. The following recommendations are intended to act as a guideline for preventative actions. They are not code or law and are intended to help eliminate the precursors to illness and injury. help you protect the health of the public while engaged in these activities.

The preferred means of risk control will be non-regulatory. However, for the health of the community, emergency intervention will be considered when illness, injury, or significant risk-factor information is evident.

A. THE FOLLOWING REDUCE THE RISK OF ILLNESS AND INJURY

- **Locate restrooms and bathhouses within 500 feet of the swimming area** – keep them clean, especially when the swimming area is very crowded.
- **Provide hand-washing facilities** – with permanent and temporary restrooms. Hot water, soap, and paper towels are highly desirable.
- **Post a "Shower Before Swimming" sign** – in an appropriate location.
- **Provide extra, temporary rest room facilities** – for high bather attendance days.
- **Provide drinking fountains** – within 500 feet of the swimming area.
- **Perform daily safety inspections** – to assure the absence of dangerous or sharp objects or damaged equipment in the bathing area.
- **Perform inspections of rest room and sewage disposal facilities** – during peak bather loading hours to assure proper sewage system function.
- **Ensure septic systems are well maintained, and not failing** – pay special attention to avoid sewage backups and surfacing effluent (surfacing sewage requires immediate action). Repair systems per Thurston County Health Department Standards, call (360) 786-5490 for assistance.
- **Frequently check the condition of bathhouses and restrooms** – to ensure they are clean, in proper working order and supplied with toilet paper, soap, and paper towels.
- **Locate a signpost where information and advisories may be posted** (see [Prevention Tips](#)) – more than one sign may be necessary.
- **Clean up broken glass** – make it part of the facility's general inspection cycle. Prohibit glass drinking containers in areas where people are likely to walk bare-footed.
- **Contain solid waste in adequate containers with tight fitting lids** – remove waste at least weekly.

B. SAFETY AND FIRST AID EQUIPMENT

Keep the following equipment available and in good repair:

- **American Red Cross 24 unit, or equivalent, first aid kit** – at least one kit should be available.
- **A rescue pole or throwing rope attached to a ring buoy.**
- **A telephone or other means of communication for emergency use** – with emergency phone location and numbers posted.

C. DEPTH MARKING (DIVING ACCIDENT PROPOSAL)

- **Provide clearly visible depth markers** – such as a float-line to show the separation of the shallow and deep areas, at a depth of three to four feet, the diving area, drop offs, and underwater obstructions.
- **Prohibit diving from rafts, piers or other platforms** – unless a minimum water depth of eight feet is provided and maintained for a distance of at least twelve feet from the edge of the diving platform.
- **Diving boards installed at three feet or less above the water** – should have a water depth at the end of the diving board of at least ten feet and should continue for at least twelve feet beyond the end and sides of the board.
- **Diving boards or platforms installed more than three feet above the water** – should have a minimum water depth of twelve feet at the end of the diving board and for at least twelve feet beyond the end and sides of the board.
- **Do not install a diving board or platform more than ten feet above the water** – account for seasonal variation in water depth in areas where diving is allowed.

NOTE: A spine board or rescue board with collar and ties should be provided only when qualified personnel are present.

Report illness or injury to the Health Department Disease Reporting Line (360) 786-5470.

Provide a Secchi disk for visibility measurement – a Secchi disk is a black and white disk at least six inches in diameter and is used for checking the depth of visibility into the water. Visibility measurements should be performed daily at a minimum of three different locations in the bathing area.

The disk should be visible at a depth of four feet whenever the swimming area is open for use. During periods of low visibility a sign with appropriate warning should be posted so swimmers and persons supervising children can take precautionary measures. Older children and adults should use the buddy system and child supervisors should be watchful. A Warning Notice of low visibility should be posted. ([Click for caution sign language example](#))

Control of Swimmer's Itch – do not allow the feeding of ducks or wildlife in or near swimming areas. Ducks and geese shed a parasite (schistosome) in their feces that causes Swimmer's Itch. Snails are part of this parasite's life cycle. Controlling snails also helps.