Use the MAHC to Make Swimming Healthy and Safe

Government agencies and the aquatics sector can use the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC) to make swimming and other water activities healthier and safer.

The MAHC is a free, science-based resource to improve health and safety in:

- Public swimming pools
- Pools and hot tubs/spas in hotels, apartment complexes, and neighborhoods
- Waterparks

The MAHC guidelines address the design, construction, operation, maintenance, policies, and management of public aquatic facilities.

Help keep people healthy and safe by using the MAHC to reduce these health risks

- **Drowning**
  - Drowning is a leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for children ages 1–14 years. Non-fatal drowning can cause brain damage resulting in learning disabilities or even permanent loss of basic functioning.

- **Injuries and emergency department (ED) visits**
  - Injuries linked to pool chemicals accounted for 3,000–5,000 emergency department visits each year. Almost half of the patients are under 18 years of age 5–7.

- **Waterborne illness outbreaks.**
  - Nearly 500 disease outbreaks linked to pools, hot tubs/spas, and water playgrounds occurred from 2000 to 2014. The leading cause of these outbreaks is Cryptosporidium. This parasite is chlorine tolerant and can cause outbreaks that sicken thousands.

- **Public pool and hot tub closings**
  - A recent study found that 1 out of 8 (11.8%) public pool inspections and 1 out of 7 (15.1%) of public hot tub/spa inspections resulted in immediate closure because of at least one identified violation that represented a serious threat to public health.

- **Evidence of pool water contamination.**
  - Sampling of public pool filter water found over half of samples contained Pseudomonas aeruginosa (59%) and E. coli or feces (58%). Another study found 1 out of 12 (8.1%) pool filter water samples contained the parasites Cryptosporidium, Giardia, or both.
How can the MAHC be used?

The MAHC is a guidance document that government agencies can use to create or update existing pool codes.

It is not a federal law and only becomes law if adopted by a state or locality. This means government agencies can

- Choose whether to adopt it at all
- Choose to use all or only certain parts
- Modify part or all of it to fit their needs
- Use it as a data resource

Aquatics sector leaders don’t have to wait for a government agency to adopt the MAHC. They can implement key MAHC elements now to start improving health and safety at their facilities.

Why is the MAHC important?

Swimming is one of the nation’s most popular sporting and leisure activities. People in the United States make more than 300 million trips a year to pools and other bodies of water. Most people have a safe and healthy time enjoying the water most of the time, but some places we swim in aren’t healthy or safe. Swimming in public pools or other aquatic facilities that aren’t healthy or safe can lead to drowning, injury from pool chemicals, or waterborne illness. Using the MAHC can help make swimming healthier and safer.

What does the MAHC include?

The MAHC includes model code language (code) and scientific explanations (annex). The MAHC addresses

- Design and construction — such as secondary disinfection systems to kill chlorine-tolerant germs and reduce illness and outbreaks.
- Operation and maintenance — such as lifeguarding standards to reduce drowning.
- Policies and management — such as training for pool operators to reduce pool chemical injuries, pool closures, and other issues.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.cdc.gov/mahc
www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming
www.cmahc.org