

## **Pools and Hot Tubs**

### **Phase 2 Requirements and Guidance (revised)**

The Governor of Montana issued a Directive on May 19, 2020 that moves Montana to Phase 2 Reopening on Monday, June 1, 2020. All pools, hot tubs (spas) and other water features (collectively referred to as “pools” in this document) may be open in Phase 2, provided that they adhere to the requirements from the Governor’s office.

**Revision explanation:** *The Governor’s Phase 2 Directive includes Appendix B, which addresses pools at gyms and public accommodations separately. The Governor’s office substantially revised the pool reopening guidance on June 5, 2020 which corrected a number of inconsistencies.*

This document has three sections:

- **Minimum requirements** that you have to meet to operate your pool in Phase 2;
- **Recommendations** that will further protect your staff, customers and our community. The recommendations come from the Governor’s Directive, the Governor’s revised guidance, the Health Officer’s Order and the Missoula City-County Health Board; and
- **Ideas and strategies** to consider when making your individualized plan.

#### **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS**

##### **1. Pool Chemistry and State Laws and Regulations**

- The CDC has indicated that properly maintained pool water inactivates the virus. As a result, it is important to follow all the requirements for sampling and maintaining pool water chemistry.
- Licensed pools and spas must follow all state law and regulations for Public Swimming Pools and Swimming Areas.

##### **2. Pre-shift Health Assessments:**

- Health Assessments must be conducted for all employees at the beginning of each shift. These health assessments screen workers for symptoms associated with COVID-19. The Health Assessment can, but doesn’t have to, include a temperature check (We strongly recommend you include a temperature check because a fever is the most common symptom of COVID-19). More information about [health assessments](#), including the current CDC list of COVID-19 symptoms, can be found here: <http://Missoula.co/cvirus>.
- Do not allow people with symptoms of COVID-19 to work.

##### **3. Maximum occupancy limited to 75% of normal operating capacity.**

- For pools that could operate in Phase 1, you were required to reduce your normal operating capacity by 50%; in Phase 2 you can increase pool and hot tub capacity to as much as 75%, but still have to meet the 6-foot distancing between pool and hot tub users (see below).
- Capacity must be further limited, if necessary, to ensure patrons will adhere to the 6-foot physical distancing requirements.
- You are required to have someone track occupancy rates in real time – incoming and outgoing – to ensure maximum occupancy does not exceed 75% of normal operating capacity at any time.

#### 4. Physical Distancing:

- Patrons and staff must maintain at least 6-foot distancing from unassociated pool users (i.e., not family members or those who came to the pool together), unless they are in a static, associated pool user group of up to 50 people. This applies when they are in the pool, on the deck, in waiting areas and while waiting in line.
- Members of a 50-person group (see below) may come closer than 6 feet to other people in that group. However, the membership of that group, at least for that day, has to be unchanging.
- Deck tables and chairs must be spaced far enough apart to facilitate 6-foot distancing. The 6-foot distance is not table-to-table, but rather measured between seated unassociated pool guests.
- Use physical barriers or visible cues to facilitate 6-foot distancing. For instance, you can:
  - Use lane markers or floating lane lines to separate the pool into distinct areas.
  - Place tape on the deck and sidewalks to designate waiting or staging areas.
  - Mark stairs and walkways with directional arrows for incoming and outgoing traffic.
- Staff must monitor shared community spaces like locker rooms so that they do not become so crowded that physical distancing cannot be maintained.

#### 5. Lap Swimming

- The Governor's guidance makes a minor exception to strict physical distancing between unassociated users: swimmers can pass closer than 6 feet from each other in neighboring lanes.

#### 6. Group size and events

- In Phase 2, groups of up to 50 people are allowed without strict social distancing. However, the group must be static – it cannot be a continual stream of people leaving and joining the group – it must be the same group of people.
- People from one group cannot intermingle with (come within 6 feet of) people from other groups while entering the venue, in the locker room, in the pool, in common areas or when exiting the venue. (They can pass by each other as long as they always stay at least 6 feet apart).
- If the group cannot be static, then social distancing between all unassociated users (i.e., not family members or people within their party) must be maintained at all times.
- Events and gatherings at pools are limited by the Health Officer's May 28, 2020 Order to 50 people (including attendees, staff and volunteers), unless the event or gathering is highly structured and meets the requirements in the Order.

#### 7. Cleaning and sanitizing

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects (such as kick boards or life jackets) each time they are used.
- Determine which disinfectant will work best for your facility. Disinfectants must be EPA-approved and effective against coronavirus. Some surfaces can be damaged by harsh cleaning chemicals. Note that pool water is not an approved disinfectant.
- Develop procedures to identify and separate used furniture and equipment from clean. For instance, you can:
  - Provide labeled bins for used pool toys and floats that need to be disinfected before another person uses them.
  - Have staff monitor the use of deck furniture, so they can sanitize surfaces after use.
- Safely store disinfectants and use in accordance with label directions.

## 8. Signs

- Signs must be posted at all entrances to the facility, using the following or substantially similar wording:
  - “People with fever, shortness of breath, a cough or other COVID-19 symptoms must refrain from using the pool.”
    - You may want to include other COVID-19 symptoms on your sign. In addition to the symptoms listed above, the current CDC guidelines also include chills or repeated shaking with chills, new loss of taste or smell, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat, fatigue and unexplained muscle or body aches, and headaches as possible symptoms of COVID-19.
  - “Observe social distancing in this facility. No loitering in common areas.”

## 9. Hygiene

- Educate staff and patrons about the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Have adequate amounts of soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues and no-touch garbage cans available.

## 10. Facility

- Ensure indoor air ventilation systems are providing adequate air exchange and are operating efficiently.
- Increase circulation of fresh air as much as possible.
  - A heating and air conditioning professional may be able to identify changes you can make in your facility to reduce the risk of virus transmission through the air. They may have recommendations about keeping windows and doors open or using different filters in your mechanical systems. You can also visit the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) website: <http://ashrae.org> for information.
- Evaluate facility water systems to ensure they are safe. Long shutdowns could require steps to minimize the risk of Legionnaire’s disease.

## 11. Lifeguards

- Designate staff other than on-duty lifeguards to be responsible for sanitizing and distancing requirements. Lifeguards need to focus on their primary duty of life saving.
- Follow certification agency recommendations for lifeguard rescues and first aid during the pandemic.

## 12. Unattended Pools

- Pools, spas, and other water features that are normally unattended, like splash decks, apartment pools, and hotel pools and spas, must make necessary operational changes in order to meet all of these requirements.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Cloth Face Coverings:**

- The Governor and Missoula City-County Health Board recommend cloth face coverings be worn when 6-foot distancing cannot be consistently maintained. Cloth face coverings can slow the spread of COVID-19 and help people who may have the virus but are not experiencing symptoms from transmitting it to others. Face coverings should be worn when in dry public

spaces; it is not recommended that cloth face coverings be worn in the water, or in humid environments where it can make breathing difficult.

#### Hygiene:

- Encourage staff and patrons to wash their hands often and to cough or sneeze into their elbow.

#### Develop and Implement Policies:

- In order for businesses to be successful in minimizing the potential spread of COVID-19, it is important to create a plan or set of protocols specifically for your business to address the four main interventions that can slow the spread of COVID-19. These four interventions include: physical distancing, staff health assessments and sick worker exclusion, enhanced cleaning and sanitizing of common surfaces and high-traffic areas, and use of personal protective equipment. The Governor's Directive also encourages businesses to adhere to industry best practices.
- Specifically, the Governor's directive suggests that the following topics be covered by business-specific plans and policies:
  - Social distancing and protective equipment
  - Temperature checks and/or symptom screening
  - Testing, isolation, and contact tracing in collaboration with public health authorities
  - Sanitation
  - Use and disinfection of common and high-traffic areas

#### Workforce:

- In addition to pre-shift health assessments, the Governor's Directive recommends that employers monitor their workforce for COVID-19 symptoms. Do not allow someone to continue to work if they becomes ill with COVID-related symptoms while at work.
- If surveillance testing designed to provide community-wide early warning becomes available, encourage your employees to voluntarily participate.
- Telework is still encouraged as a way to reduce potential transmission of the virus, if the work can be accomplished remotely. When telework is not feasible, employers are encouraged to accommodate alternative work schedules such as shift work and staggered scheduling in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines.
- To date, many of the cases in Montana have been related to travel. Minimize non-essential business travel to prevent possible exposure to the disease in other areas.

#### Vulnerable Individuals:

- Make special accommodations for members of a vulnerable population or those with vulnerable household members.

#### Shared Items:

- Discourage the sharing of items such as food, equipment and toys that cannot be easily disinfected between users.

## IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

The COVID-19 Reopen Missoula County Work Group, pulled together by the Mayor, Commission and the Missoula Economic Partnership provided recommendations for reopening businesses, facilities, and events. The following ideas and strategies were suggested by that group. These are not requirements, but can help you create a plan for your facility.

### Emergency Response:

- In addition to not assigning lifeguards to duties other than lifeguarding, ensure that staff knows that while they are required to stay 6 feet away from pool users in normal operations, this does not apply when they need to respond to a medical emergency or provide life-sustaining support, such as CPR, First Aid, AED use or a water rescue. In addition to following the guidance by the [American Red Cross](#) and the [American Heart Association](#), it is a good idea to establish a clear safety policy and provide staff with the necessary personal protective equipment. Be sure to train staff on any changes in your response policy or PPE use so they can respond quickly and confidently in an emergency.

### Compliance with COVID-related requirements:

- Your patrons will take cues from you and your staff about how they should act in your establishment. When your staff understand why it is important to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, and they model the correct behaviors, patrons are more likely to comply with social distancing, face covering use, staying home when sick, etc. Ideas to achieve this include:
  - Designate specific staff to remind patrons (and staff) to maintain social distancing throughout the facility.
  - Have extra face coverings or masks on hand for staff or patrons if they do not bring their own from home.
  - Have staff sanitize or wash their hands frequently.
  - Ask pool users as they enter the facility if they have any COVID-19 symptoms, and if they do, ask them to wait until they are well to swim at your facility.
  - Have an easy refund policy to encourage sick patrons to stay home.

### Physical Distancing

- You will need parents and caregivers help to enforce and support physical distancing. Hopefully, parents will consider whether their children can stay at least 6 feet from other swimmers (outside their family or associated group) before bringing them to your facility. Ask parents and caregivers to help keep their kids at least 6 feet from other users.
- Some ideas that could help you achieve the physical distancing requirements include:
  - Determine the number of people who can be in specific parts of your facility and still be able to maintain 6-foot physical distancing. Clearly post those capacity limits and locate them in highly visible places.
  - If a pool or area is at the capacity limit, have staff direct patrons to another part of the facility until space becomes available.
  - If people have to wait in line to enter a part of your facility, place tape or other markers on the floor to make it easier for patrons to maintain the required physical distancing.
  - Have pool users reserve swimming times so you can control how many people are in

your facility at one time.

- Pre-sell passes or entry fees to minimize crowding at entrances.
- Limit patron time in the building to ensure social distancing to give more patrons the ability to use the pool.
- Designate separate entry and exit locations for the facility and locker rooms.

#### Cleaning and Sanitizing:

- To help make sure that pool chairs, tables and other items are not used by another group before they are sanitized, provide “Used: Needs to be Sanitized” signs for patrons to clearly mark items for cleaning.
- Worker stations and equipment should be cleaned and sanitized every time a different staff person uses them. Provide sanitization materials at every workstation.

#### Shared Equipment:

- Some items, like whistles, rescue masks, and hip packs, cannot be easily disinfected between uses. It would be best if those types of items did not need to be shared between staff.
- Do not allow staff or patrons to share items that contact the face, like goggles and snorkels.
- Provide an adequate supply of kick boards, noodles, etc. to allow for proper sanitization between uses.

#### Hygiene

- Encourage patrons to sanitize their hands as they enter the venue.

#### Program Considerations

- Design programs, events, and activities so that physical distancing can be maintained. That could include:
  - Restricting the number of other people in the pool while the group activity is occurring.
  - Limiting the number of spectators so physical distancing can be achieved.
  - Scheduling programs so there will not be overlap in the locker rooms.
  - Organize coaching and instructional programming with physical distancing requirements in mind.

#### Facility considerations

- Close drinking fountains and encourage patrons to bring their own water or provide water through non-touch means like water bottle refill stations.

#### Additional Signs

- Educational signage in addition to those required by the governor’s directive can help your patrons understand more about how to stay safe and protect others during the pandemic. One idea is to post signs that share how to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Have questions? Please contact us at 258-4755, or [envhealth@missoulacounty.us](mailto:envhealth@missoulacounty.us).