

California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health Recreational Health Committee

Guidelines for Construction and Operation of Bulkheads

Background

There has been a trend in the pool industry to install bulkheads in large competition pools. A bulkhead is a floating movable partition that physically separates a pool into two different sections, which increases the pool's versatility. A bulkhead is typically used to shorten the overall length of a pool. For example, a 75 meter competition pool can be shortened to allow it to be used for 50 meter competition. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide requirements for the installation of bulkheads which, when followed, will reduce the potential safety hazards associated with bulkheads.

A bulkhead may be installed at a swimming pool under the following conditions:

1. An adequate number of lifeguards shall be provided at all times the pool is in operation. At least one of these lifeguards shall be stationed on or adjacent to the bulkhead.
2. The bulkhead shall be removable.
3. The bulkhead shall be designed, installed and operated so that the possibility of entrapment is reduced to a minimum. The bulkhead shall be installed so that either;
 - a. The bulkhead extends down to the pool floor and openings between the bulkhead and pool floor and walls is at least 3 inches but not greater than 5 inches.
 - b. There is at least 4 feet of clearance between the bottom of the bulkhead and the pool floor and openings between the bulkhead and pool walls is at least 3 inches but not greater than 5 inches.
4. If a bulkhead is operated with an open area underneath, the following shall be required:
 - a. No one shall be allowed to swim beneath the bulkhead.
 - b. A line of contrasting color at least 4 inches wide shall mark the bottom edge of the bulkhead.
 - c. The bottom of the bulkhead shall be designed so that a pool user cannot be entrapped underneath the bulkhead.
5. The bulkhead shall be level with the pool deck.
6. The bulkhead shall be at least 4 feet in width and finished on top with a durable, slip-resistant material.
7. The distance from the normal water level to the top of the bulkhead shall conform with the requirements in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24.
8. The bulkhead placement shall not interfere with the required water circulation in the pool.
9. The bulkhead shall be designed to afford a handhold as required in the CCR, Title 24.
10. The proper number of entrances/exits to the pool as required in the CCR, Title 24 shall be provided when the bulkhead is in place.
11. The pool manager and staff shall be trained in the proper operation and maintenance of the bulkhead and the procedures shall be part of the pool operations manual.