

# Recreational Water Protocol

## Preamble

The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) are published by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care under the authority of the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA)<sup>1</sup> to specify the mandatory health programs and services provided by boards of health. Protocols are program and topic specific documents which provide direction on how boards of health must operationalize specific requirement(s) identified within the OPHS. They are an important mechanism by which greater standardization is achieved in the province-wide implementation of public health programs.

Protocols identify the minimum expectations for public health programs and services. Boards of health have the authority to develop programs and services in excess of minimum requirements where required to address local needs. Boards of health are accountable for implementing the standards including those protocols that are incorporated into the standards.

## Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to assist in the prevention and reduction of water-borne illness and injury related to recreational water use by providing direction to boards of health on the components of the Safe Water Program related to public recreational water facilities, which include but are not limited to:

- Surveillance and inspection of recreational water facilities;
- Management of and response to water-borne illness and injury related to recreational water use at recreational water facilities;
- Education and training of owner/operators of recreational water facilities; and
- Reporting of Safe Water Program data elements to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (the “ministry”) related to recreational water facilities.

Legislation and regulations that are relevant to this protocol include:

- O. Reg. 565<sup>2</sup> (Public Pools) under the HPPA<sup>1</sup>;
- O. Reg. 428/05<sup>3</sup> (Public Spas) under the HPPA<sup>1</sup>; and
- Ontario Building Code<sup>4</sup>.

This protocol replaces the following protocols:

- *Operation of Public Spas Protocol, January 1998.*
- *Public Wading Pools Protocol, January 1998.*

## Reference to the Standards

The table below identifies the OPHS standard and requirements to which this protocol relates.

Standard	Requirement
Safe Water	Requirement #1: The board of health shall report Safe Water Program data elements in accordance with the <i>Beach Management Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current); the <i>Drinking Water Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current); and the <i>Recreational Water Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current).
	Requirement #5: The board of health shall conduct surveillance of recreational water facilities in accordance with the <i>Recreational Water Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current).

Standard	Requirement
	Requirement #9: The board of health shall provide education and training for owner/operators of recreational water facilities in accordance with the <i>Recreational Water Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current).
	<p>Requirement #10: The board of health shall ensure that the medical officer of health or designate is available on a 24/7 basis to receive reports of and respond to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adverse events related to safe water, such as reports of adverse drinking water on drinking-water systems governed under the Health Protection and Promotion Act or the Safe Drinking Water Act;</li> <li>• Reports of water-borne illnesses or outbreaks;</li> <li>• Safe water issues arising from floods, fires, power outages, or other situations that may affect water safety; and</li> <li>• Safe water issues relating to recreational water use including public beaches</li> </ul> <p>in accordance with the Health Protection and Promotion Act; the <i>Beach Management Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current); the <i>Drinking Water Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current); the <i>Infectious Diseases Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current); the <i>Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current); and the <i>Recreational Water Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current).</p>
	Requirement #14: The board of health shall reduce the risks of recreational water facility use by implementing a management program in accordance with the <i>Recreational Water Protocol, 2008</i> (or as current).

## Operational Roles and Responsibilities

### 1) Surveillance and inspection

#### Inventory of recreational water facilities

- a) The board of health shall maintain an inventory or inventories of all regulated and non-regulated recreational water facilities as defined in this protocol.

#### Assessment and inspection of recreational water facilities

##### Regulated public pools and public spas

- b) The board of health shall:
- i) Inspect regulated public pools and public spas prior to opening or reopening after construction, alteration, or closure of more than four weeks' duration to determine compliance with O. Reg. 565<sup>2</sup> and O. Reg. 428/05<sup>3</sup> respectively;
  - ii) Inspect regulated public pools and public spas at least two times per year and no less than once every three months while operating to determine compliance with O. Reg. 565<sup>2</sup> and O. Reg. 428/05<sup>3</sup> respectively; and
  - iii) Conduct additional inspections of regulated public pools and public spas as necessary to address non-compliance with O. Reg. 565<sup>2</sup> and O. Reg. 428/05<sup>3</sup> respectively, observed during previous inspection(s); to investigate complaints and/or reports of illness or injury; and/or to monitor the safety of the facilities.

Inspections of regulated public pools and public spas carried out by boards of health shall include but are not limited to:

- Observations to determine compliance with regulation;
- Testing water quality parameters and collection of water samples, as deemed necessary;
- Communication of results to the owner or operator of the regulated public pool or public spa; and
- Communication of requirements, if applicable, to the owner or operator of each regulated public pool or public spa.

##### Non-regulated recreational water facilities

- c) The board of health shall:
- i) Inspect public wading pools and splash pads/spray pads at least two times per year and no less than once every three months while operating. In conducting these inspections, the board of health shall refer to the most current version of the *Operating Procedures for Non-Regulated Recreational Water Facilities Guidance Document*, for information;
  - ii) Inspect other non-regulated recreational water facilities (e.g., water slide receiving basins) at least two times per year and no less than once every three months while operating to monitor the safety of these facilities; and

- iii) Conduct additional inspections of non-regulated recreational water facilities as necessary to follow up on observations from previous inspection(s); to investigate complaints and/or reports of illness or injury; and/or to monitor the safety of the facilities.

## 2) Management and response

### 24/7 on-call and response policy

- a) The board of health shall have an on-call system for receiving and responding to reports of water-related emergencies, outbreaks and incidents in the health unit on a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week (24/7) basis related to recreational water use at recreational water facilities.
- b) The board of health shall act on complaints and reports related to recreational water use at recreational water facilities within 24 hours of notification of the complaint or report to determine the appropriate response required.
- c) Where the board of health suspects that a microbiological, chemical, physical or radiological agent has been transmitted through water intended for recreational water use, the board of health shall:
  - i) Respond appropriately within 24 hours of receiving report of the water-related incident, illness, injury or outbreak;
  - ii) Conduct outbreak investigations for microbiological agents in accordance with the *Infectious Diseases Protocol, 2008* (or as current); and
  - iii) Conduct investigations for chemical, physical or radiological agents in accordance with the *Risk Assessment and Inspection of Facilities Protocol, 2008* (or as current).

### Enforcement actions and procedures

- d) The board of health shall address non-compliance with the HPPA<sup>1</sup> and related regulations and take action with respect to recreational water facilities where recreational water use may not be safe.

### Liaison with community agencies

- e) The board of health shall liaise with owners, operators or their agents to assist them in becoming compliant with regulations upon being notified or becoming aware of newly constructed regulated recreational water facilities.

## 3) Education and training

### Recreational water education

- a) The board of health shall ensure the availability of information and/or educational material to:
  - i) Private citizens regarding the safe use of recreational water facilities; and
  - ii) Owners and operators of recreational water facilities, through the inspection process and at other available opportunities, regarding applicable regulations and operational procedures relevant to recreational water facilities.

### Training of owners and operators of regulated recreational water facilities

- b) The board of health shall ensure the availability of a recreational water training program to owners and operators of regulated recreational water facilities with the following minimum training requirements:
  - i) Public health legislation and regulations, as applicable;
  - ii) Pool operation and maintenance;
  - iii) Prevention of illness, accident or injury;
  - iv) Pool water chemistry;
  - v) Sanitary operation of other amenities in the facility;
  - vi) Provision of safety equipment;
  - vii) Emergency procedures; and
  - viii) Safety supervision.

## 4) Reporting

- a) The board of health shall record inspection data pertaining to recreational water facilities under its jurisdiction and provide information as required by the ministry.

## Glossary

**Public wading pool:** A wading pool other than a private residential wading pool or a wading pool for display or promotional purposes only.

**Recreational water facilities:** These include, for the purposes of this protocol, those facilities that are regulated under the HPPA<sup>1</sup> (i.e., public pools and public spas), as well as non-regulated facilities that provide public access to water for recreational use, including public wading pools, splash pads/spray pads, and water slide receiving basins.

**Wading pool:** Any structure, basin, chamber, or tank containing or intended to contain an artificial body of water having a depth of water equal to 75 centimetres (30 inches) or less at any point that is provided for the recreational or instructive use of young children<sup>5</sup>

## References

1. *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7.  
Available from [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90h07\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h07_e.htm).
2. O. Reg. 565/90. Available from [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_900565\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900565_e.htm)
3. O. Reg. 428/05. Available from [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_050428\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_050428_e.htm)
4. O. Reg. 350/06. Available from [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_060350\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_060350_e.htm)
5. O. Reg. 350/06, c.1, s.1.4.1. Available from [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_060350\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_060350_e.htm).