

COVID-19 Guidance for Public Pools and Aquatic Facilities

12/01/2020

At this time, in accordance with Executive Order 20-99 (EO), activities at public pools are not allowed for four weeks, from Friday, Nov. 20, 2020, at 11:59 p.m. through Friday, Dec. 18, 2020, at 11:59 p.m.

An update to this document has been completed since Nov. 18, 2020. Information was added on page 2 to clarify when a pool or facility may remain open according to the EO.

Executive Order 20-99

Why are we dialing back on certain activities for four weeks?

Throughout the month of November, the data has made clear with each passing day that we need to take decisive and aggressive action to contain the most recent phase of the pandemic. Minnesota recently topped 200,000 total confirmed COVID-19 cases. It took Minnesota more than 6 months to record 100,000 COVID-19 cases, but only 42 days to add an additional 100,000 new cases. We averaged a state record of almost 6,000 cases per day over the previous week, breaking single-day records for COVID-19 deaths (58) on Nov. 11 and new cases (8,689) on Nov. 14. The Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) most recent weekly COVID-19 report found that the current average rates of new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and intensive care unit admissions, and deaths are the highest they have been since the start of the pandemic, far exceeding the numbers we saw in the worst points of our surges in April and May. We need strong action to control our future case numbers.

EO requirements

The full executive order (EO) with all requirements can be found at [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp).

- **Social gatherings prohibited.** Social gatherings are groups of people who are not members of the same household, congregated together for a common or coordinated social, community, or leisure purpose – even if social distancing can be maintained. This prohibition includes planned and spontaneous gatherings as well as public and private gatherings. Most commercial activities are not considered social gatherings, so this change will not impact most industries.
- **Businesses and activities are affected differently.** For a full listing of all business and activity requirements and limitations, see the full executive order at [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp). Many, but not all, businesses will have to

pause in-person activities for the next four weeks. Please review the guidance below for industry-specific requirements and applicable Preparedness Plan Guidance Requirements.

- **Masks and face coverings required.** Executive Order 20-81, requiring face coverings in certain settings, remains in full force and effect.
- **People at higher risk.** All people currently living within the State of Minnesota who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, as defined by Executive Order 20-55, are strongly urged to stay at home or in their place of residence and follow the provisions of Executive Order 20-55.
- **Work from home.** All people who can work from home must continue to do so.

EO requirements for public swimming pools

For the four-week period, public pools will operate under the following provisions:

Public pools must close

- Public pools, including spa pools, wading pools, and special purpose pools must close.
- Public pools are defined in [Minnesota Statutes 2020, Section 1444.1222](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.1222) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.1222>).
- "Public pool" means any pool other than a private residential pool, that is:
 - Open to the public generally, whether for a fee or free of charge;
 - Open exclusively to members of an organization and their guests;
 - Open to residents of a multiunit apartment building, apartment complex, residential real estate development, or other multifamily residential area;
 - Open to patrons of a hotel or lodging or other public accommodation facility; or
 - Operated by a person in a park, school, licensed child care facility, group home, motel, camp, resort, club, condominium, manufactured home park, or political subdivision.
- Swimming pools at family day care homes licensed under section [Minnesota Statutes 2020, 245A.14, subdivision 11](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/245A.14#stat.245A.14.11) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/245A.14#stat.245A.14.11>), paragraph (a) are not "public pools."

Some pools may remain open

Pools in some settings are not Places of Public Accommodation and are not subject to the closure in EO 20-99. These settings include health care facilities, child care facilities, residential care facilities, congregate care facilities, correctional facilities, and juvenile justice facilities. Each of these settings must refer to industry-specific guidance to determine the requirements specific to their setting.

Operators of pools at these locations are encouraged to minimize or prohibit social and recreational use of the pools during this time.

Preparing to close the facility

Secure premises to prevent access

Drowning remains a leading cause of accidental injury death in the United States. Be sure all doors, gates, and windows that allow access are closed and locked.

Maintain recirculation and disinfection

All pools and spas

Maintain the pool chemistry even if the pool is not operational.

- Keep the water chemically balanced to prevent damage to surfaces and equipment by corrosive or scale-forming water. Properly balanced water will prevent biofilm and algae growth.
- Minimize the use of pool heaters. Heaters should be run for 15-20 minutes after starting circulation to ensure they are operating correctly. After that, they can be turned off until the pool is ready to be open for bathers.
- Reduce the speed of the circulation pump. Ensure there is enough water flow to keep the chemical controllers operating, and to turn the volume of water over at least once daily.
- Maintain the pool as normal. Check and balance the water chemistry, remove debris, and clean the skimmer and pump baskets no less than once a week. Continued maintenance includes brushing, vacuuming, and backwashing.

Aquatic play features

Aquatic play features or fountains such as water slides, cascading mushrooms, dumping buckets, or spray decks must be operated intermittently. Circulate water through these features several times per week for at least 30 minutes to help reduce pathogens in plumbing lines that service these features.

Hot tubs and spas: *Legionella* concerns

Extended closures of hot tubs and spas can increase the risk of waterborne diseases such as Legionnaires' disease. *Legionella* is the organism that causes Legionnaire's Disease and Pontiac Fever. It is important to ensure hot tubs and spas are safe to use and minimize the transmission of *Legionella* and other bacteria.

See the following CDC guidance:

[Extended Hot Tub/Spa Closures \(www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/extended-hot-tub-closures.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/extended-hot-tub-closures.html)

[Operating Public Hot Tubs/Spas \(www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/operating-public-hot-tubs.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/operating-public-hot-tubs.html)

[Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html)

Lifeguards and Trained Pool Operator Certification

Certification courses for lifeguards and trained pool operators may be held. Distance learning should be optimized, and in-person class sizes are restricted to those allowed by current Executive Orders.

Health screening must be done before each class, and those experiencing symptoms should be excluded.

For in-person lifeguard certification courses, each instructor and student should have their own manikin, educational equipment, and disposable supplies, as applicable. Manikins and shared instruction materials must be disinfected between each use. Follow manufacturers' guidance for manikin cleaning and disinfection.

Every effort should be made to maintain physical distancing except for aspects of training that can only be performed within closer distances and/or contact. The Red Cross has developed social distancing guidance for resuscitation education and "Interim Virtual Skills Training" for portions of its lifeguarding courses. Facilities with access to this material are encouraged to use it when planning and implementing courses.



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Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.