

## Fact Sheet

# Management of display spa pools

Unless properly maintained, the warm, aerated water in a spa pool can provide ideal conditions for disease causing microorganisms to live and multiply. This can create a potential health risk for people using or in the vicinity of the spa pool. Display spa pools in public venues, retail sales outlets and promotional events are regulated public spa pools under the South Australian Public Health (General) Regulations 2013 (the General Regulations).



Owners and operators of display spa pools must comply with all relevant regulatory requirements and ensure that risks to public health are minimised. This fact sheet provides information on the application of the General Regulations to display spa pools.

## What health risks are associated with spa pools?

The most common health risks associated with spa pools are infections due to contact with harmful water-borne microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. Contact with contaminated spa pool water or aerosols (airborne droplets) generated by spa pool jets can lead to:

- > skin, ear, and eye infections.
- > gastro-intestinal infections.
- > genito-urinary infections.
- > serious or fatal respiratory infections such as Legionnaires' disease.



These health risks are not trivial. In 1999 a display spa at a Netherlands flower show was responsible for one of the largest known outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease, resulting in the death of 21 people.

## If a spa pool is used for demonstration or display purposes only, and is not available for regular use by staff, customers, or the public - is it a public spa pool?

Yes - display spa pools containing water are public spa pools. According to regulation 3(1)(c) of the General Regulations, a public spa pool is: 'a spa pool that is for the use of persons who attend, live or work on the premises...'.

The term 'use' is not restricted to persons using the spa pool in the most familiar sense; that is to soak in the pool for relaxation. A spa pool is in 'use' if it contains water and:

- > staff or members of the public are permitted to fully or partially immerse their hands, body parts, or whole body in the pool, or
- > members of the public, staff, or potential customers to are able to observe the features of the spa pool in operation. That is, heating the water or operating the jets or any other equipment associated with the spa pool.



Display spa pools containing water must therefore comply with all relevant requirements of the General Regulations and associated standard.

### Is a display spa pool closed if I put up a sign indicating this, or by preventing public access by means of locked doors or gates?

No - a display spa pool will only be considered closed if it is not deemed to be in use as previously defined.

### What must I do to keep my display spa pool operating?

While a spa pool is in use it is the responsibility of the owner and/or operator to operate it in accordance with the mandatory requirements of the General Regulations, including:

- > installation of equipment that automatically analyses and maintains disinfectant and pH levels at prescribed concentrations.
- > manual testing (at least daily) of water quality parameters, including disinfectant and pH levels, temperature, and other relevant tests.
- > record keeping, including all manual and automated test results, to be retained for a minimum of two years.
- > operation of a filtration system that provides continuous circulation and passes a volume of water equivalent to all water in the spa pool through the filter at least once in every 30 minutes.
- > cleaning the spa pool at least once in every week.

- > water replacement of at least:
  - 20 per cent every day that the pool is in use, or
  - completely draining and replacing the water once per week.

A public spa pool must also be under the care, control, and management of a person with appropriate knowledge and experience.

Further information to assist public spa pool owners and operators is provided in SA Health's:

- > Standard for the Operation of Swimming Pools and Spa Pools in South Australia.
- > Guideline for the Inspection and Maintenance of Swimming Pools and Spa Pools in South Australia.

### Regulatory inspections

Display spa pools may be inspected for compliance by an environmental health officer from the local council. This may include assessment of water quality, record keeping and the knowledge and experience of the person responsible for the operation and maintenance of the spa pool.

### Non-compliance

Local councils are responsible for the administration and enforcement of the General Regulations. Fines and penalties may apply if non-compliance is identified.

### Further information

Contact an environmental health officer at your local council.

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## For more information

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