



# Additional Facilities Bring Additional Risk

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**Property managers can often find themselves responsible for the day-to-day operation of many additional facilities present within residential blocks.**

Some of the higher risk areas under managing agents' control can be leisure facilities such as gyms, spas, saunas and particularly swimming pools. This requires managing agents to have an appreciation of the hazards and risks to users of these facilities. Some of the issues that can be factors in injuries or fatalities can be:

- Lack of supervision
- Insufficient emergency response
- Failure to identify casualties due to unclear pool water
- Unauthorised access to pools
- Prior health problems
- Users consuming food or alcohol before using facilities
- Inexperienced users
- Weak swimmers
- Diving.

It is the pool operator's duty to ensure risks are identified, assessed and controlled. As all property managers will be aware, risk assessments should be completed to cover all risks within the business, but do these often include the leisure facilities as well?

Every pool in the country, whether it is privately or commercially used, should have a Pool Safe Operating Procedure (PSOP). This will consist of a Normal Operating Procedure (NOP) and an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) if done correctly. The NOP will give detail on the day-to-day operation of the pool, whilst

the EAP gives specific instructions on the action to be taken in the event of an emergency.

If the facilities are used by third parties such as swimming instructors, risk assessments and insurance documents should also be obtained from the third party before any use is permitted.

Inductions should be completed for residents prior to use of the leisure facilities with a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PARQ) completed prior to the induction. The PARQ should identify any medical conditions or health reasons that could put users at risk when using the facilities.

Commonly for swimming pools within residential blocks, constant poolside supervision by lifeguards is not reasonably practicable meaning the facilities are often unmanned. One of the recurring issues is that little is in place for monitoring. For gyms, saunas and steam rooms, an immediate response is not necessarily required, however a delayed response of even five minutes in a swimming pool can have significant and potentially fatal consequences. Protecting residents' privacy has been given as a reason for lack of CCTV coverage, however we would recommend full CCTV coverage of all pools and gyms within properties with emergency responders given access to view the CCTV. Emergency responders should also be sufficiently trained.

Other controls may include signage showing the depth of water and warning

that the facility is unmanned, emergency alarms, rescue equipment, etc.

Poolside checks can be carried out at regular intervals and general safety inspections of all facilities should be carried out and recorded. These can be completed by concierge staff who are often the only resource present.

Maintenance activities pose their own risks, plant rooms should be secured and separate rooms available for acid and chlorine dosing. Chemicals should be stored suitably in a secure bunded area and microbiological testing should be carried out regularly.

One of the main sources of knowledge for health and safety in swimming pools is the Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools publication, HSG 179, which provides invaluable information. Its aim is to "provide guidance on the risks associated with swimming pool operation and the precautions which may be taken to achieve a safer environment for people who use swimming pools and employees who work at them". HSG 179 complements the requirements of BS EN 15288-1 Swimming pools Part 1: Safety requirements for design and BS EN 15288-2 Swimming pools Part 2: Safety requirements for operation.

I know what you are thinking "Why have I never had to do this before?" or "I'm sure a hotel I stayed at once didn't have anything in place" and you are right to have these thoughts. Of course, you can carry on with the current procedures you have in place but is it likely to stop something going wrong or provide enough of an adequate response. Be proactive rather than reactive and set a high standard for your industry.

PIB Risk Management carry out audits of leisure facilities assessing the health and safety requirements common to swimming pools and gyms, the risk to life from swimming activities and wider associated areas including gym activities and how the risks are managed. Our audits use HSG 179 as a benchmark and we provide clear recommendations to improve the management of health and safety throughout the facilities.

## For more information

Call 01777 861861, email [info@pibrm.com](mailto:info@pibrm.com) or browse [www.pib-riskmanagement.co.uk](http://www.pib-riskmanagement.co.uk)

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