



**Ontario Public Health Association**

**l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario**

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**RESOLUTION #3**

**REGULATION AND INSPECTION OF SPLASH PADS  
AND OTHER SIMILAR FORMS OF WET RECREATION  
(i.e., WATER SLIDE RECEIVING BASINS)**

A Resolution adopted by the  
Ontario Public Health Association  
*Code* 2008-03 (RES) *Status* Active

**RESOLUTION #3: REGULATION AND INSPECTION OF SPLASH PADS AND OTHER SIMILAR FORMS OF WET RECREATION**

**WHEREAS** In the last few years, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of water theme parks. As a result, public health concern is also growing over the use of splash pads and receiving basins for activities such as water slides and children's wet play areas. Epidemiological evidence is clear that recreational activities that involve body contact with water present a significant public health risk to bathers, particularly children, if they are not properly operated and maintained.

Health impacts related to children's wet play areas, water slides, catchments and receiving basins include infections of the ear, eyes, nose, throat and skin infections and urinary tract. There are also safety hazards associated with water intake inlets and bather collisions.

Major concerns have been associated with splash pads that are operated with recycled water and or with holding tanks. Standard pool filters followed by chlorination are not effective against *cryptosporidium*<sup>1</sup>. Cryptosporidiosis occurs worldwide due to exposures from water and contaminated food. In the United States, an estimated 300,000 cases of cryptosporidiosis occur each year<sup>2</sup>. According to the U.S. Centre for Disease Control (2008), travelers to and from developing countries may be at greater risk for infection because of poorer water treatment and food sanitation. Outbreaks of other pathogens, for example, *E. coli* O157:H7 have been linked to spray parks as well<sup>3</sup>.

Last year, the USA and Canada experienced an increase in waterborne outbreaks of *Cryptosporidium* associated with the use of splash pads<sup>4</sup>. In Ontario, Toronto Public Health experienced a significant outbreak at the Toronto Zoo last year.

It is well recognized in Ontario by public health professionals that regulations and guidelines for inspection, sanitation, and disinfection are absolutely necessary for protection of public health. There are currently no public health regulations in Ontario concerning water quality, sanitation, disinfection, operation, and inspection of splash pads, water slides and other forms of children's wet recreation facilities.

The Ontario Regulation 565 of R.R.O 1990 under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (Public Pools) does not include or deal with splash pads and it exempts receiving basins at the bottom of water slides.

Currently the Amusement Devices Act Regulation 342/87 administered by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations outlines mainly the requirements for original construction and physical and structural maintenance of water slides.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines under the Water Quality Program Standards and the newly drafted Ontario Public Health Standards require the boards of health to ensure that water used for specified recreational purposes meet MOHLTC guidelines/protocols as

applicable and boards must ensure the availability of educational programs regarding health related operational procedures applicable to public bathing beaches, public spas, public swimming pools, public wading pools, splash pads and public water slides. At this time, no Ontario MOHLTC protocols or guidelines are available for splash pads or public water slides. Section 13 of the *H.P.P.A.* is the only legal authority that health units have to deal with sanitation, operation, water chemistry, maintenance and safety of water slides, splash pads and their catch basins. This standard approach needs to be updated and new regulations, standards, guidelines and or protocols should be developed to assist local health units in Ontario, **and**

**WHEREAS** Epidemiological evidence is clear that splash pads and water slides and other similar wet facilities pose a significant public health risk if they are not properly designed, operated and maintained, **and**

**WHEREAS** There has been a growing number of outbreaks and recent public health concern over the increasing use of public splash pads and water slides and other similar wet facilities over the past decade, **and**

**WHEREAS** It is well recognized in Ontario by public health professionals that regulations and guidelines for inspection are absolutely necessary for the protection of public health.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**

**THAT** OPHA advocate to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care take legislative measures in creating regulations and/or guidelines to ensure that public health inspectors have standards governing sanitation, operation, inspection, safety, disinfection, and maintenance of splash pads, water slides and similar wet facilities, **and**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THEREFORE,**

**THAT** OPHA request the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to amend regulation 565 (Public Pools) to include splash pads, receiving basins and other like forms of wet recreation.

## Implementation Plan

The Environmental Health Workgroup will forward this resolution on to the Ontario MOHLTC (Public Health Division) and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for follow up and action. Copies will also be sent off to Health Canada, the Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors of Ontario, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, and the Canadian Public Health Association - Environmental Health Division.

## REFERENCES

1. <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Business/documents/Health/CryptoPoolsProtocol.pdf> Retrieved on July 18, 2008.
2. <http://www.cdc.gov/crypto/epi.html> Retrieved on July 18, 2008.
3. Mark Gilbert, MD, Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Island Health Authority (Field Epi July 2004-Oct 2005), CFEP Seminar - February 7, 2006. Bug Spray: An outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 associated with a children's interactive spray park.
4. Katarina Pintar, PhD, May 14, 2008, Public Health Agency of Canada, ROWPH Training Workshop, Waterloo, Ontario. Cryptosporidium and Giardia.
5. More than 1000 cases of the parasite cryptosporidium have been confirmed in North Texas Spray Park  
[http://www.wfaa.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/tv/stories/wfaa080926\\_lj\\_stjames.b4221cdc.html](http://www.wfaa.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/tv/stories/wfaa080926_lj_stjames.b4221cdc.html)

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Status: Policy statements (resolutions, position papers, and motions) are categorized as:

#### **Active, if:**

1. The activities outlined in the policy statement's implementation plan have not yet been completed,
2. The policy statement addresses an issue that is currently relevant to public health in Ontario.

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1. The activities outlined in the policy statement's implementation plan have been completed, or
2. The policy statement addresses an issue that is not currently relevant to public health in Ontario or is not based upon the most current evidence. The statement remains the position of the OPHA until a new statement is adopted that effectively reverses or essentially negates all or major elements of an earlier statement. In this instance, the former supercedes the latter.

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