Getting your feet wet...

2004 Guidelines for Boards of Trustees for the safe operation and management of a school swimming pool.
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This resource is a component of the ACC PoolSafe programme, developed by Water Safety New Zealand and ACC. ACC PoolSafe incorporates a range of initiatives aimed at reducing the number of water related injuries in and around New Zealand pools.
**BOARDS OF TRUSTEES OBLIGATIONS**

Boards of Trustees are legally obliged to ensure the safety of all people who use school facilities, including the school swimming pool. Boards of Trustees must ensure they reduce the chances of people drowning or injuring themselves while using the pool.

In addition to the Ministry of Education’s Swimming Pool Policy, there are two key pieces of legislation which reflect this obligation – Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, and the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987. There are also a number of standards that outline the minimum requirements for managing a swimming pool and the training of staff – NZS 5628:2000 and Unit Standard 20046.

The checklist below provides a quick and simple means of determining whether your school swimming pool complies with the appropriate legislation and minimum standards.

It is recommended that Boards of Trustees establish policies for the use of the school swimming pool, both during school hours and outside of school hours. Recommended policies are provided within this guide to assist Board of Trustees to develop their school pool policy.

Access to school pools outside of school hours is often a concern for Boards of Trustees, however, through the development of a sound policy addressing obligations and expected behaviours of pool users, this use can be better managed and the risks minimised.

### A Quick Checklist for Schools with Swimming Pools

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RECOMMENDED SCHOOL SWIMMING POOL POLICY

The following key points should be used in conjunction with the swimming pool users code as the basis of the Board of Trustees School Swimming Pool Policy.

1. Fence the school pool in accordance with the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987.
   Schools are required to comply with this legislation.

2. Ensure the gate closes securely at all times.
   A self-closing mechanism must be fitted to the gate to ensure it closes securely at all times. This is required as part of the compliance with the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987. Regularly check the operation and effectiveness of the gates and locks. Replace locks, which stick or are slow to close.

3. Keep all pool chemicals locked away.
   All pool chemicals should be securely placed away from the swimming pool and changing rooms. Ensure chemicals are stored and disposed of in accordance with manufacturers instructions. Pool equipment should not be stored in the same area as the pool chemicals, as this may enable school children to access hazardous and dangerous chemicals.

   The quality of the pool water should fulfll the requirements of the New Zealand standard NZS5826:2000. This standard is a plain language code of practice for the operation and management of water quality in public swimming pools, including school pools.

5. Train staff in water quality management and swim teaching.
   Unit standards and qualifications exist for water quality management and swim teaching. Ensure staff that are charged with these responsibilities are professionally trained.

   Establish a swimming pool supervision standard for school use.
   During any session when the pool is in use there shall be one person designated as the swimming pool supervisor who will supervise the pool at all times.
   This supervision level shall apply to the swimming pool supervisor’s line of sight. If there is more than one swimming pool, or the design of the pool means not all areas are visible from one location, more than one supervisor will be required.
   As the number of pool users increase, the number of supervision staff will need to increase. Similarly, the use of specialised equipment may require an increase in staff.

7. Establish a swimming pool user’s code.
   A swimming pool user's code should reflect the Board of Trustees expectations for pool use and user behaviour. This code should cover the use of equipment (or the banning of equipment) as well as specifying the minimum age for supervision of younger children.
   Water Safety New Zealand and the New Zealand Recreation Association have developed a code of practice for public swimming pools which recommends children under 8 years of age be supervised by a person older than 16 years of age. This recommendation is based on the public pools providing professional lifeguards.

8. Pool equipment.
   Keep pool equipment in a secure, but easily accessible place, as these can be potential hazards if left lying around the pool. Avoid keeping pool equipment, such as teaching aids in the same place as pool chemicals. Aquatic equipment and toys, such as boogie boards, are not designed for use in school swimming pools. The use of this equipment should be actively discouraged.

9. Provide public notification of the swimming pool policy and pool users code.
   A copy of the policy and pool users code, including a clear warning as to whether the pool has any life guarding services, should be put in an obvious place to ensure everyone’s safety, e.g. on the outside of the gate so everyone reads them on entry, and inside on a notice Board and in the changing room areas.

10. First-aid and emergency contacts.
    An emergency telephone and first-aid kit should be available within the pool complex in a secure and vandal-proof place. Using an identical key for the gate and first-aid kit will allow all users access to the kit. Regularly check the kit to ensure there are sufficient supplies. Ensure emergency contact details, such as school contact people, as well as the location of the first-aid kit and closest telephone are advertised in clearly visible places.
RECOMMENDED POOL USER’S CODE

Water Safety New Zealand recommends the following as a Pool User’s Code.

Swimming is fun and enjoyable, but pools can be dangerous. Water presents a risk of drowning and injury can be sustained from the hard pool surfaces or the misuse of equipment. To ensure your safety, and the safety and enjoyment of other pool users, the (school name) Board of Trustees have established the following code of behaviour for all pool users.

• Never swim alone. It’s more fun with family and friends.
• Never swim while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
• Take additional care if you have a medical condition such as epilepsy, asthma, diabetes or a heart condition.

• Always check the depth of water before entering the pool, as every pool is different. Look for hazards such as diving boards, water slides, or steep slopes into deeper water.
• No running, jumping, or diving into the pool.
• Avoid holding your breath and swimming long distances underwater.
• Return pool equipment to the storeroom.
• Boogie boards, surf boards, kayaks are not to be used in this pool.
• Ensure the pool gate is securely closed when you leave.

Each code should be customised to each pool and to represent each Board of Trustees requirements.
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION SWIMMING POOL POLICY 2004

The Ministry of Education recognises being able to swim is important for all New Zealanders, and the role schools have traditionally played in teaching children to swim. The Ministry has established the following policy for the provision and upkeep of swimming pools.

New and replacement pools

The building and funding of a new pool is the responsibility of Boards of Trustees, often with the assistance of the community. This includes the pool and associated facilities such as fences, changing sheds, pool covers and roofing, filter plant. The design of swimming pools and associated plant is covered by NZS 4441:1985.

Removing or upgrading the pool

If the school decides to permanently close or decommission the pool, it can have it removed, and provide for the filling and re-landscaping of the area. This will need to be factored into the school’s 10YPP and budgeted into its 5YP agreement. Similarly, any major upgrade of the pool would have to be programmed into the budget in the same way. Note that the Ministry is unlikely to agree to a 10YPP budget that includes an upgrade to a pool that has come to the end of its economic life.

If the pool is shared with your community, any upgrade to the community share of the pool will have to be paid for out of Board funds (not Ministry provided funding under the 5YP Programme) and in accordance with the arrangement between the school and the community user.

Maintenance funding for your pool

Schools receive funding to maintain their pools through the maintenance component of the operational funding. The size of your pool is used to work out the amount of funding up to a maximum size. Maximum pool sizes are: learners 25 x 6 metres; intermediate/secondary 33.3 x 12 metres.

Boards will need to budget their own funds for the extra cost of maintaining pools bigger than these sizes. Maintenance includes: painting the pool, fence repairs, the filtration plant, ancillary buildings such as changing sheds, and the chemical storage, pool covers, roofing structures.

Operating expenses

The school is responsible for paying for the running costs of the pool out of its operational funding. Operating expenses include: pool chemicals, water charges, salary of the person responsible for maintaining pool hygiene and maintenance (e.g. the caretaker).

Swimming pool water quality standard

Swimming pool water is quickly contaminated by swimmers who bring into the water dirt, sweat, body fats, faecal matter, oral and nasal discharges, as well as hair and lint from swimming togs. Wind blown debris and material from the pool surrounds can also enter the pool and add to the pollution. The New Zealand Standard that governs the quality of water present in swimming pools is NZS 5826:2000 Code of practice for the operation of swimming pools. Refer to the Ministry of Education’s Water Quality Policy.

Sharing the pool with your community

Sharing the pool is a good way to get help with the costs of its upkeep. For any community use, have a formal written agreement with the other users of the pool. Having a written agreement is essential for insurance purposes. It should include how much the community users will pay towards maintenance and operating expenses of the pool. This may include contributions towards major improvements as well.

Fencing of swimming pools

The Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987 requires immediate pool areas to be fenced, as specified in the Building Act 1991 and the Building Code. In addition it is the Ministry of Education’s policy that all school pools be fenced to Building Code requirements.

Insurance of pools

The Ministry will insure school swimming pools to the maximum pool sizes (see ‘maintenance’ for pool sizes). If there are other users, such as the community, the level of insurance cover will be determined by how much the school uses the pool and how much it is used by others. These levels of usage should be agreed to by the Board and the other users and recorded in writing. If nothing is recorded, the Board will be responsible for the community share of the insurance.
Thorough planning and sound preparation are the basis of any successful aquatic experience. A well-managed swimming pool, which is regularly maintained, should provide both teachers and students with an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Prior to the start of your swimming season, take the opportunity to upgrade and repair the swimming pool, as well as provide training opportunities for teachers and parents alike on the accepted use of the pool.

Safety is paramount in any aquatic environment and overrides everything else. Teaching in an aquatic environment (including a school swimming pool) differs from teaching in other venues, and it is easy to overlook a number of factors specific to water safety. The use of a risk management identification and planning tool and a safety checklist help the teacher and/or caretaker to recognise potential hazards, find potential problems and identify management and emergency procedures.

Ministry Guidelines for Health and Safety in Schools

The Ministry of Education’s 2003 Guidelines for Health and Safety, detailing the requirements for health and safety in schools, specifically those relating to school swimming pools are outlined below.


31 Swimming pools

31.1 Board of Trustee’s duties in relation to pool users

a) During school hours, Boards shall ensure the health and safety of students, staff and others using the school swimming pool as detailed in clauses 31.2 to 31.6 below;

b) Outside of school hours, the Board is not responsible for any harm to pool users provided that when the pool and surroundings is made available to the public, the Board complies with the provisions of this Code. This includes the duty of the Board to warn those who have permission to use the pool of any out of the ordinary, work related hazards that they should be aware of, such as construction work within the pool site.

31.2 Fencing of swimming pools

All school pools should be fenced in accordance with the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987 and the New Zealand Building Code, including a gate with a self-closing mechanism.

31.3 Swimming pool policy

Boards shall have a pool policy detailing the use of the swimming pool. This policy shall be available to all pool users, including the public, who use the pool with the permission of the Board. The policy should be easily accessible, such as on a notice Board beside the gate. The content of the policy shall include rules of the pool, use of equipment and location of amenities and the following safety provisions:

a) No person is to swim alone;

b) Children under 8 years are not permitted in the swimming pool area unless supervised by a person at least 16 years old;

c) During any session when the pool is in use, there shall be at least one person designated as the swimming pool supervisor who will supervise the pool at all times. The number of additional supervisors required will be determined by the number of swimmers;

d) The pool gate shall be securely closed at all times;

e) Behaviour that could be considered dangerous, such as running, pushing, holding under and screaming, is prohibited;

f) A list with an emergency telephone number and the location of the first aid kit.

Ministry of Education’s Swimming Pool Water Quality Standard

The New Zealand standard which governs quality of water in swimming pools is NZS 5826:2000. The objective of this Standard is to ensure that the water in swimming pools is maintained to safe chemical and microbiological levels to:

- Protect swimmers from unsafe bacteria;
- Safeguard swimmers against the discomfit of chemical burns to skin and mucous membranes;
- Minimise the damage to the pool and associated equipment; and
- Have a pool, which appears clean and sparkling.

How does the water become contaminated?

Swimmers who bring dirt, sweat, body fats, faecal matter, oral and nasal discharges into the water, as well as hair and lint from swimming togs can quickly contaminate swimming pool water. Wind blown debris and material from the pool surrounds can also enter the pool and add to the pollution.

What measures must you take to keep the water clean?

1. In order to ensure that the water remains chemically and microbiologically safe, regular testing is required and the frequency of these tests is specified in NZS 5826:2000.

2. Having an efficient mechanical filter system and chemical treatment of the water maintains the pool water in a safe and hygienic condition for swimmers.
3. You need to be aware of bather load, or the maximum number of people using the pool per day, depending on the size of your pool. On a hot day, loss of disinfecting chlorine through high ultra violet levels and overuse by swimmers as class after class take to the pool, can lead to a failure of the filters and chemical treatment to cope. The resulting degradation of the water can lead to a high health risk for swimmers.

What does the Standard provide?

1. NZS 5826:2000 provides the desired values for the correct pH, alkalinity, calcium hardness, freely available chlorine, total chlorine and other features that make up the pool chemistry.

2. A requirement of the standard is for monthly microbiological monitoring to guard against harmful organisms in the water. This testing cannot be carried out by the school and requires pool water samples to be sent away to laboratories specialising in water treatment. The local public health office can provide the location of the nearest testing laboratory.

3. Advice is also provided in the appendix of the Standard, on the procedures to be followed in the event of a faecal discharge or a diarrhoea incident, which has the potential to introduce giardia or cryptosporidium to pool water.

4. Guidance is also provided on the safe handling and storage of the potentially unstable and explosive pool chemicals.

School pools are “public pools”

Another implication of the Standard is that school pools are classified as “public pools”. For public pools the operation of the water treatment systems shall be the responsibility of person(s) holding NZQA unit standards in swimming pool water quality. Also that the management of pool water quality shall be under continuous technical supervision and the qualified person(s) shall be readily accessible when the pool is operating.
Swimming Pool Annual Budget

Pool maintenance is required on an annual basis and should be budgeted for each year. Putting off maintenance and repairs of the swimming pool or plant will only lead to higher costs in the long term. If maintenance work is required, especially if it relates to health and safety issues, work needs to be undertaken as soon as possible – even as an interim measure until new budgets are approved. If pool management or swim teaching services are outsourced, these too must be included within the annual budgeting process. Operating expenses, insurance, staff training and equipment replacement should also be incorporated into the annual budget.

Long-term budgeting for development, construction, and maintenance will need to comply with the Ministry of Education’s requirements if the Board of Trustees are expecting funding from this source. External sources of funding, such as community and gaming trusts, will have specific requirements for the distribution of their funding for capital development. In 2003, Swimming New Zealand published their National Swimming Facility Strategy, which recommends a five key issues, which should be taken into consideration during the development of new swimming facilities.

Summary of Funding Responsibilities

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<td>Board/community, owns funds</td>
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<td>Capital upgrades of existing pools <strong>standard size</strong> <strong>over entitlement portion</strong></td>
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Source: Ministry of Education Property Management Guide 2003
Outsourcing Pool Maintenance

For many Boards of Trustees the idea of training staff in pool management may not be an option. In such instances, Water Safety New Zealand and the New Zealand Recreation Association recommend Boards of Trustees make contact with their local public swimming pool to determine whether these services can be managed externally.

For local public swimming pools, providing a pool maintenance service for schools can be seen as desirable given the increased public awareness of health issues often attributed to swimming pools. Using external professional services will enable a Board of Trustees to remain current with industry trends and standards, and may provide wider opportunities for school aquatic programmes.

Decommissioning a Pool

Some schools are choosing to close their swimming pools due to a number of reasons, not least the cost of ongoing maintenance. If the Board of Trustees elects to close the school swimming pool, the health and safety issues must still be considered. A derelict pool is a greater hazard to school children and the public than a well used and managed pool.

Leaving an unused pool fully or partially filled with water means the pool fencing must still comply with the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987. Using the pool as a repository for unwanted school equipment is inexcusable and an accident waiting to happen. If the pool is to remain permanently unused, decommissioning the pool, plant and machinery should be undertaken by professionals to ensure the area is safe and secure, and does not pose a potential hazard.

If your pool is removed, the Ministry of Education under the capital works programme can consider filling in the hole and landscaping the area. Boards of Trustees can apply for assistance with funding to have this work done, under the FAS.
LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987
The Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987 requires any swimming or spa pool deeper than 400mm to be fenced. This applies to new and pre-existing pools – whether filled or partially filled with water. The Act clearly details the specifications for the construction of a pool fence, including information on height, ground clearance, materials, gates and doors, and the operation of gates and doors. The Act also details compliance in accordance with the Building Act 1991 and the Building Code.

This requirement means even a disused or decommissioned pool must be fenced in compliance with the Act. Infact, in such a state, a disused pool may create a greater hazard than a well maintained and used pool.

Boards of Trustees are recommended to obtain a copy of the Act to ensure their pools comply, as non-compliance is liable for fines.

Building Act 1991 and Building Code
It is Ministry of Education’s policy for all school pools to be fenced to Building Code requirements

Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992
Under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, Boards of Trustees are required to take all practicable steps to provide and maintain a safe working environment, provide and maintain facilities for the safety and health of employees at work, and to ensure actions at work do not result in harm to other people, including members of the public.

Boards of Trustees must ensure any action or inaction does not lead directly to any harm to employees, students or volunteers while the school pool is being utilised.

There is often a lot of confusion as to the legal requirements covering volunteers. In relation to schools, the Act outlines these requirements which are similar to those for employees, namely to take all practicable steps to ensure health and safety of the volunteer while they are undertaking voluntary work for the school.

Within the Act, specific reference is made to the adequate training and supervision of staff that use any kind of plant or substance. In the context of a school swimming pool, this requirement means schools must ensure any staff with the responsibility for managing the pool or using the pool are adequately trained. Unit standards are available for water quality management, and training programmes and initiatives, which provide for swim teaching, are nationally available. Refer to training section for more details.

Outside of school hours, the Boards of Trustees are not directly responsible nor liable for any harm to pool users providing the pool and surrounds are safe (as is normally required) when the pool is available to the public.

Supervision and control of pool users outside of school hours is not the responsibility of the Boards of Trustees, however, it is recommended your school policy on supervision be clearly specified to pool users.

Water Quality Standard NZS 5826:2000
The Water Quality Standard NZS 5826:2000 replaces and updates the old standard (NZS 5826:1985). The purpose of the Water Quality Standard is to maintain the chemical and microbiological levels within a safe range for use and enjoyment, as well as ensuring the degradation of the pool and plant equipment is minimised.

Because this Standard provides a means of safeguarding the health of those using school swimming pools, it has been made a requirement of the Ministry of Education’s Health and Safety Code of Practice. Therefore, it is mandatory for New Zealand state and state integrated schools to comply with the Standard.

New requirements have been outlined within this Standard for both the education and training of those involved in managing water quality in pools, and also for improved health and safety requirements of water quality in response to newly identified biological concerns, such as cryptosporidium. Refer section on Qualifications and Training Opportunities.

The level of testing outlined in the standard should not be considered onerous if the health and safety of users is important for Boards of Trustees. Testing daily while the pool is in use is the minimum requirement, but if scheduled as part of the daily routine, e.g. prior to use and then every three hours. These tests can be completed in 10 minutes, but the monthly microbiological monitoring cannot be carried out by a school and requires specialised laboratory testing. Your local Public Health Officers should be able to provide details of the nearest testing laboratory.

This standard sets out the requirements for the design of safety signs for use around water, including school pools.
QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Unit Standard 20046 – Monitor Public Pool Water Quality and Safe Storage of Chemicals.

The Sport, Fitness and Recreation Industry Training Organisation (SFRITO) have developed a number of unit standards covering water quality treatment and management. While most of the water quality unit standards are designed for those employed in public/community swimming facilities, there is one unit standard, which is recommended for schools. Unit Standard 20046 has been designed for school caretakers and is the recommended minimum training to achieve the Water Quality Standard NZS 5826:2000.

It is recommended that where schools operate a ‘commercial’ public pool those responsible for water quality be assessed against Unit 5692, Treat Public Pool Water.

Under the Ministry of Education Swimming Pool Water Quality Policy, schools are required to have at least one person present, or readily accessible, when the pool is in operation that holds this unit standard in swimming pool water quality.

Other unit standards in swimming pool water treatment and plant management, which can be obtained, are the following:

Unit Standard 5692 – Treat Public Pool Water

People credited with this unit standard are able to: maintain pool water quality; apply pool water treatment processes in accordance with the HSE Act; and monitor water quality, record data, and implement processes to adjust chemicals to comply with NZS 5826.

Unit Standard 5693 - Operate and maintain public pool water treatment plant and equipment

People credited with this unit standard are able to: operate plant and equipment used in public pools; demonstrate knowledge of routine maintenance of plant and equipment used in public pools; and identify operational savings in the operation and maintenance of public pool water treatment plant and equipment.

Swim For Life

The Water Safety New Zealand Swim For Life initiative provides opportunities for schools to access expert advice and guidance in assessing their current status in providing water safety and swimming education to students, as well as identifying community-based options for enhancing and expanding school programmes.

The current strategy focuses on providing primary and intermediate school teachers with training in methods of teaching swimming and personnel survival. Training in the SwimSafe programme, for teachers at schools aligned with the Swim For Life initiative, is currently fully funded by WSNZ and will provide teachers with the skills and confidence to deliver effective learn to swim programmes.

Swim For Life is being promoted regionally through a partnership with the Regional Sports Trusts. To find out more about the initiative and to get your school involved contact your Regional Sports Trust.

SwimSafe – Learn to Swim and Personal Survival Programme

Swimming New Zealand’s SwimSafe programme for teaching learn to swim and personal survival has been created for those who teach introductory swimming, and is recommended a minimum qualification for school teachers and parents. This one-day course is available nationally year round, and covers confidence building activities, water safety skills, effective teaching skills, practical pool sessions and risk management. Instructors are required to complete 20 hours practical swim teaching to gain this certification.

National Lifeguard Award

The New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA) in association with the Sport, Fitness and Recreation Industry Training Organisation (SFRITO) has developed the National Lifeguard Award for professional lifeguards. While the focus of the Award is for those employed in public/community swimming facilities, it is recommended Boards of Trustees consider training staff responsible for swimming supervision in this Award.
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Ministry of Education
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www.minedu.govt.nz

• Health and Safety in Schools 2003. Guidelines to the
  Health and Safety an Employment Act and the Health
  And Safety Code of Practice for State and State
  Integrated Schools. Sections 1 and 2: Guidelines to
  the Health and Safety in Employment Act
• Health and Safety in Schools 2003. Guidelines to the
  Health and Safety an Employment Act and the Health
  And Safety Code of Practice for State and State
  Integrated Schools. Section 3: The Health and Safety
  Code of Practice for State and State Integrated Schools.
• Property Management Guidelines 2004
• Swimming Pool Water Quality Standard 2004
• Swimming Pool Policy 2004

Statutes
www.legislation.govt.nz

• Education Act 1989
• Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987
• Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992
• Building Act 1991

Standards New Zealand
Private Bag 2439, Wellington 6020
Tel (04) 498 5990
Fax (04) 498 5994
www.standards.co.nz

• NZS5628:2000 Pool Water Quality
• NZS8690:2003 Water Safety Signage

SFRITO
PO Box 2138, Wellington
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New Zealand Qualifications Authority
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