

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

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Review of Safety Measures at Philadelphia's Public Pools

Parks & Recreation

August 2014



City Controller
ALAN BUTKOVITZ



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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August 29, 2014

Michael DiBerardinis
Deputy Mayor for Environmental and Community Resources
Philadelphia Parks and Recreation
One Parkway
1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102-1587

Ref: Review of Safety Measures at Philadelphia's Public Pools

Dear Deputy Mayor DiBerardinis:

Pursuant to Section 6-400(d) of the Home Rule Charter, the Controller's Office conducted safety inspections of Philadelphia's swimming pools and spraygrounds. The results of our inspections are contained in the enclosed report, a synopsis of which is provided in the executive summary.

We found that the majority of the facilities, 54 or 67%, were observed to have a safe and secure environment for both swimmers and visitors. The enclosed report lists the details of our findings with photos along with recommendations for improvements.

We would like to express our thanks to you and your staff for the courtesy and cooperation displayed toward us during the conduct of our work.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alan Butkovitz'.

ALAN BUTKOVITZ
City Controller

AB:wb
Enclosure

cc: Honorable Michael A. Nutter, Mayor
Honorable Darrell L. Clarke, President
Susan Slawson, First Deputy Commissioner, Parks and Recreation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why the Controller's Office Conducted the Review

With more than 80 locations around the city for residents to enjoy swimming pools and or spraygrounds maintained by the City of Philadelphia's Parks and Recreations, the Controller's Office conducted a review of these recreational water sites to ascertain as to whether any hazardous conditions existed. On-site inspections were performed at every facility during the peak summer swimming season to ensure a safe environment.

What the Controller's Office Found

Of the 81 pools and spraygrounds throughout the City, the Controller's Office found that the majority, 54 or 67%, were observed to have a safe and secure environment for both swimmers and visitors. While the remaining pools contained conditions that range from minor to potentially hazardous, these conditions can easily be corrected if appropriate actions are taken. The observed conditions are as follows:

- Uneven or cracked concrete on pool decking, creating possible tripping hazards was found at fourteen (14) pools.
- Blocked drains causing puddling, creating slipping hazards were found at five (5) locations with swimming pools.
- A broken pool ladder marked with yellow caution tape blocking access to a section of the pool was observed at the Morris Estate pool.
- Improper storage of chemicals such as chlorine was observed at the Denby Pool and Poplar Pool.
- The sprayground at 48th and Woodland Avenue had a broken drainage system, leaking water through a nearby concrete wall.

What the Controller's Office Recommends

While the majority of the City's pool and spraygrounds are maintained in a safe and secure manner, the Controller's Office recommends that Parks and Recreation develop a plan for next year to identify and correct the safety issues as they occur.

CONTENTS

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
Object, Scope & Methodology	4
FINDINGS	5
Conditions that Need to be Repaired or Improved	5
General Conditions.....	5
Site Specific Conditions with Photographs	6-13
Table: List of Facilities with Safety Issues	14
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	15

INTRODUCTION

Objective, Scope and Methodology

In August 2014, the Controller's Office conducted 81 onsite safety inspections of the City of Philadelphia's swimming pools and spraygrounds, which are playgrounds equipped with sprinklers, water jets, spray poles, and splash pads. The Controller's Office conducted the inspections to as to ascertain if any hazardous conditions existed.

The Controller's Office visited the location of every swimming pool and sprayground during hours that they were scheduled to be open to the public. Investigators checked the safety issues listed below:

1. The facility was open upon the investigators' arrival and the number of people waiting in line to enter the facility;
2. The facility had operational hours and rules publicly posted;
3. The number of lifeguards on duty actively watching the swimmers;
4. Life saving equipment was present and located near lifeguards in case of emergency;
5. The water clarity and water content (clean of debris), dates and results of PH level tests;
6. Construction or debris in areas were traveled by pool visitors; and,
7. Interviews of facility staff to determine if Water Safety Inspections were being conducted

Along with employing a checklist, investigators documented conditions or issues observed with photographs.

While the Controller's Office was conducting the onsite inspections, there was an incident at the O'Connor Pool located at 26th and South Streets where three children swimming in the pool were shocked by an alleged electrical current at the facility. Since the investigators had not examined the facility prior to the incident, additional information concerning the incident was requested from Parks and Recreation. Parks and Recreation provided the Controller's Office with its plan of action to further insure the public's pool safety.

FINDINGS

Majority of Water Recreation Facilities Presented Safe Conditions

Of the 81 pools and spraygrounds throughout the City, the Controller's Office found that the majority, 54 or 67 % were observed to have a safe and secure environment for both swimmers and visitors. This included viewing the life guards actively monitoring the swimming pools and immediate surrounding areas leading to the water.

In addition, investigators observed that the life-saving equipment was present at all but one facility, where it was in the recreation facility's office and not by the swimming pool area. The hours and rules were clearly posted and investigators found that the Water Safety Inspections reports (WSI) were being conducted by Parks and Recreation staff.

In response to the electrical-shock incident at the O'Connor Pool, Parks and Recreation has issued a Pool Plan of Action and Repair Protocol that was provided to the Controller's Office and includes the following:

- All pools to be inspected for electrical issues;
- Insulation to be installed between pool motor and mounting base where required;
- Remove unnecessary lighting circuits in pool area;
- Contract with an outside agency to inspect and certify O'Connor pool; and,
- Outside agency will also inspect any pools that it deems necessary after its initial inspection

Parks and Recreation representatives also notified the Controller's Office that prior to any electrical or mechanical work being done on a pool or sprayground, the Repair Protocol requires the pool to be closed before work begins. In the case of an emergency repair during operating hours, the pool will be close until the work is completed.

Conditions that Need to be Repaired or Improved

General Conditions

There was broken concrete and missing caulking that created an un-even pavement at pool deck areas, which caused tripping hazards. In some instances, the un-even pavement resulted in puddling of water, which created slipping hazards. Another tripping hazard was observed at a swimming pool where a safety line was tied from the perimeter fence on both sides of the pool and running across deck area.

Investigators found a broken pool ladder that was marked with yellow caution tape but blocking access to that section of the pool. Other conditions around the pool area included the improper storage of chlorine chemical containers, where patrons could easily come in contact with a

mixture of the chlorine and surrounding water. At one pool, there was significant paint peeling from the base.

The PH levels at all the pools were checked within hours of the Investigator's visits and showed that the levels were within normal range (7.2 to 8.0), except at 11 pools which recorded either a level above or a level below the normal range.

Site-Specific with Conditions

The following conditions at the specific water recreation facility:



East Poplar Pool – Un-Even Concrete Pool Area Tripping Hazard



East Poplar Pool – Pool chlorine chemicals on ground at pool deck area



Dendy Pool – Chlorine Chemical at Pool Deck Area

48th & Woodland Avenue Sprayground
Broken drain pipe from sprayground leaking through wall onto Woodland Avenue pavement



48th & Woodland Avenue Sprayground
Leaking water through wall from defective drainpipe from sprayground area



**Mill Creek Pool
Tripping Hazard**



**Mill Creek Pool
Un-even Surface Tripping Hazard**



**Mill Creek Pool
Un-even Surface Tripping Hazard
Pipe to Fill Pool Broken**



Smith Playground - Sprayground

Smith Playground – Plumbing Access Panel – Wooden Cove



Smith Playground
Plumbing Access Panel Opened Revealing Deep Access Well



Stinger Square Playground

Un-Even Concrete at Pool Deck Area – Tripping Hazard



Morris Estate Recreation Center



Broken Pool Ladder Taped Off

Baker Playground

Paint peeling



Lawncrest Recreation Center



Safety lines tied across pool and deck areas – Tripping Hazard

List of Facilities with Safety Issues

	Name of Facility	Un-Even/ Broken Pavement/ Missing Caulking Pool Deck Area	Clogged Drains /Puddling	Peeling Paint	Other
1.	48th & Woodland Avenue				Broken drain pipe leaking through wall
2.	Amos				Broken Lifeguard Seat
3.	Baker			Peeling Paint	
4.	Belfield		Clogged Drains/Puddling		
5.	Chew	Uneven Pavement			
6.	Cione	Broken/Uneven Pavement			
7.	Dendy				Improper Storage of Pool Chemicals
8.	East Poplar				Improper Storage of Pool Chemicals
9.	Ford	Missing Caulking at Ladder Area			
10.	Fox Chase	Broken Pavement	Clogged Drains/Puddling		
11.	Heitzman	Broken Pavement			
12.	Hillside	Broken Pavement			
13.	Houseman			Peeling Paint	
14.	Jacobs	Uneven Pavement			
15.	Lackman	Broken Pavement			
16.	Lawncrest	Broken Pavement			Safety lines across pool & pool deck area
17.	Lederer	Broken Pavement			
18.	Mill Creek	Broken Uneven Pavement			Raised metal cover deck area tripping hazard
19.	Mitchell	Uneven Pavement			
20.	Morris Estate		Puddling		Broken Ladder/Taped Off
21.	Piccoli	Uneven pavement	Clogged Drains/Puddling		
22.	Scanlon				Pool Fill Pipe Broken
23.	Schmidt			Peeling Paint	
24.	Shepard			Peeling Paint	
25.	Smith				Wooden plumbing access well cover
26.	Stinger Square	Uneven Pavement			
27.	Vare		Clogged Drains/Puddling		Grass growing in pool deck area

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

While the majority of the City's pool and spraygrounds were maintained in a safe and secure manner, the Controller's Office recommends that Parks and Recreation develop a plan for next year to identify and correct the safety issues as they occur.

The Controller's Office recommends that all the conditions listed below be corrected to help ensure a safe swimming season next summer:

- Properly store pool chemicals in areas away from patrons and to prevent any incidents where they might come in contact with the chemicals;
- Repair of broken pool ladders and chairs – egresses from the pool;
- Repair of areas of broken and uneven concrete on pool decks - tripping hazard;
- Removal of all tripping hazards from the pool deck area – safety lines and other objects;
- Repair of clogged drains in the pool deck area – prevent slipping injuries; and
- Painting of the pools concrete surface.