



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES ♦ DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



Recreational Waters Program
5050 Commerce Drive Baldwin Park, CA 91706-1423
Tel (626) 430-5360 FAX (626) 813-3016 rhealth@ph.lacounty.gov

**GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF
BULKHEADS IN COMMERCIAL SWIMMING POOLS**

There is a growing trend in the pool industry to install bulkheads in large competition pools. A bulkhead is a floating movable partition that physically separates a pool into two different sections, (see Attachment 1). Typically, a bulkhead is used to shorten the overall length of a pool, which generally increases the pool's versatility. For example, a 75 meter competition pool can be shortened to allow it to be used for 50 meter competition.

Incorrect installation and/or operation of bulkheads can create potential safety hazards. Such hazards however, can be significantly reduced if bulkheads are installed and operated correctly; and closely monitored for safety during hours of operation. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure bulkheads are constructed and operated in a manner that will reduce the potential safety hazards associated with bulkheads and protect public health.

**A BULKHEAD MAY BE INSTALLED IN A COMMERCIAL SWIMMING POOL
PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS ARE MET**

1. An adequate number of lifeguards shall be provided at all times the pool is in operation. At least one of these lifeguards shall be stationed on or adjacent to the bulkhead.
2. The bulkhead shall be removable.
3. The bulkhead shall be designed, installed and operated so that the possibility of entrapment is reduced to a minimum. The bulkhead shall be installed so that either:
 - a. The bulkhead extends down to the pool floor and openings between the bulkhead and pool floor and walls is at least 3 inches but not greater than 5 inches OR
 - b. There is at least 4 feet of clearance between the bottom of the bulkhead and the pool floor and openings between the bulkhead and pool walls are at least 3 inches but not greater than 5 inches.
4. If a bulkhead is operated with an open area underneath, the following conditions are required:
 - a. No one shall be allowed to swim beneath the bulkhead.
 - b. A line of contrasting color at least 4 inches wide shall mark the bottom edge of the bulkhead.
 - c. The bottom of the bulkhead shall be designed so that a pool user cannot be entrapped underneath the bulkhead.

Bulkhead Guidelines

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5. The bulkhead shall be level with the pool deck.
6. The bulkhead shall be at least 4 feet in width and finished on top with a durable, slip-resistant material.
7. The distance from the normal water level to the top of the bulkhead shall conform to the requirements in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24.
8. The bulkhead placement shall not interfere with the required water circulation in the pool.
9. The bulkhead shall be designed to afford a handhold as required in the CCR, Title 24.
10. The proper number of entrances/exits to the pool as required in the CCR, Title 24 shall be provided when the bulkhead is in place.
11. The pool manager and staff shall be trained in the proper operation and maintenance of the bulkhead and the procedures shall be part of the pool operations manual.
12. Proper operation of the bulkhead shall be monitored during all hours of operation.

Failure to follow these guidelines will put persons at risk for pool accidents. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact the Recreational Waters Program at 626-430-5360 or email rhealth@ph.lacounty.gov.