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Time to Switch Gears



"While it's wise to take a breather to prevent burnout, it's time to focus on the year ahead. That's why we timed our annual Facility Improvements Issue for this month."

Happy Autumn!
I hope the summer season was rewarding and joyous, filled with children who became swimmers for life through your lessons, adults who became more limber and stable from your aquatics exercise courses, and families who reveled in the power of water to bring people together. (And I hope they were kind to the staff.) May you and your team benefit from the happy memories, lessons, and new friendships gained.

But, as those of us who love aquatics know, it is a year-round endeavor. While it's wise to take a breather to prevent burnout, it's time to focus on the year ahead. That's why we timed our annual Facility Improvements Issue for this month. We've developed a package we believe will help you prepare for the next season.

To start, we're thrilled to introduce a new column by Juliene Hefer and Kirsten Barnes, executive director/CEO and assistant director, respectively, of the Association of Aquatic Professionals. They kick off a multi-part series tackling the age-old conundrum of securing funding for improvements and projects. They don't just give us tips on what to say. That will come later. Here, they walk us through a fundamental task that not everyone performs: assessing, refining, and implementing a preventive maintenance plan for your facility. They explain how this seemingly trivial, even mundane, task can make all the difference when it comes time to ask for funding, and they outline the steps for doing it. A sound plan, they explain, is more than a stack of work orders. It identifies the assets that need attention, schedules the work, assigns responsibility and documents the result. Those records can reveal recurring problems and give decision-makers a clearer

picture of needs before a small issue becomes an expensive emergency. Surely performing this task will help carry your facility into the next season and beyond. You'll find the debut of Heffer's and Barnes' column on page 14.

Secondly, you'll find a case study on the design and construction of the most popular add-on for aquatics facilities: spray pads. In "Water Welcomes All," aquatic play equipment expert Sylvia Bucklew walks us through the development of an inclusive spray pad in the Town of Sahuarita, Ariz., near Tucson. The community's first splashpad was a surefire way to update its most popular recreational space, and Bucklew explains how. The project also shows how inclusion can be built into the experience from the ground up. Navigable surfaces welcome strollers, wheelchairs and walkers, while different spray zones offer anything from gentle sensory play to a more energetic soak. A recirculating filtration system helps conserve water.

Finally, developing your lifeguard training plan never stops. As always, our resident lifeguard trainer, Pete DeQuincy, provides two 15-minute drills to help hone your team's ability to deliver high-quality CPR, with an emphasis on performing this life-saving skill as a team. They are brief, but they reinforce the habits that make teamwork more effective when seconds matter.

How you close out this year can determine the success of the next. Let the planning begin! | **AQI**

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CMAHC ISSUES COLD-PLUNGE GUIDANCE

Framework covers commercial cold-water venue operations



PHOTO © ALEKSEI SMYSHLIAEV/DREAMSTIME.COM

As cold plunges and ice baths gain popularity, the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code has released guidance to help public health agencies and industry professionals evaluate the design and operation of commercial cold-water venues.

The nonregulatory document does not create legal requirements. Instead, it provides recommended practices for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of cold-water facilities in commercial and wellness settings.

Developed by CMAHC's Ad Hoc Cold-Water Venue Committee, the guidance addresses issues that distinguish cold-water systems from conventional pools and spas, including water quality, disinfection, bather safety, and risk communication. The committee includes public health officials and aquatics industry experts from the United States, Canada, and Australia.

The document addresses design and plan review, including bather load, circulation, and condensation control; water quality and disinfection challenges; operations and maintenance; signage; and special considerations for single-bather, small-volume systems.

Because cold-water venues commonly operate at approximately 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit, CMAHC recommends that systems be designed for turnover rates similar to those for spas—30 minutes or less. The guidance also recommends free-chlorine levels of at least 3.0 ppm or bromine levels of at least 4.0 ppm, without exceeding maximum concentrations in manufacturers' instructions. It recommends against using cyanuric acid in cold-water systems.

The guidance also addresses who can use cold-water vessels safely, and who should avoid them.

"Cold-water venues present operational and safety challenges that are meaningfully different from traditional pools and spas," said Sarah Cheshire, committee chair. "This guidance gives regulators and operators a practical, science-based framework to work from." | **AQI**

FLUIDRA ADDS DIGITAL TWIN TECHNOLOGY FOR COMMERCIAL POOLS

Fluidra, one of the pool industry's "Big 3" manufacturers, has acquired Datapool, a digital twin platform from Ecotropy. Fluidra initially invested in Ecotropy in 2024.

The platform will be fully integrated into Fluidra's commercial pool operations, leveraging analytics, Internet of Things solutions, and real-time data to help customers make more informed management decisions. Fluidra said the acquisition supports its strategy to provide connected solutions and develop more intelligent management models.

"This acquisition marks a milestone in our digitalization strategy," said Thorsten Muck, Fluidra's commercial pool director. "Datapool allows us to accelerate the transition toward an intelligent pool management model, improving efficiency, reducing environmental impact, and offering our customers data-driven tools to make better decisions." | **AQI**

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SURF PARK SUMMIT BREAKS ATTENDANCE RECORD

Approximately 400 senior leaders in the surf park industry gathered in September in Virginia Beach, Va., for what organizers called the largest event of its kind to date.

The gathering brought together real estate developers, equity and debt investors, operators, technology companies, and other industry leaders to help advance the growing sector.

Attendees toured Atlantic Park Surf, the surf park near the conference venue, and watched the Chlorine Clash, an invitational competition that brings top surfers to Atlantic Park.

Organizers also held Surf Park Sharks, a pitch event in which early-stage developers present their projects to a panel of industry professionals and investors for feedback. Hidden Lake Surf Resort, planned for Buckeye, Ariz., was selected as this year's winner (pictured upper right).

Led by sponsor and managing partner Drew Boyles, the Hidden Lake team presented plans for a 120-acre destination centered on an existing lake. The development would include a 12.5-acre Endless Surf lagoon, resort hotel, beach club, marina, villas, casitas, and glamping accommodations.



PHOTO COURTESY SURF PARK CENTRAL

Other finalists also included Ida Surf Park in Boise, Idaho; PA National Surfing Club at Montage Mountain in northeastern Pennsylvania; and Cleora, a residential project situated near Salida, Colo.

Ida Surf Park founder Brandon Watson emphasized Idaho's outdoor-oriented culture as an advantage for a surf park destination. The PA National Surfing Club team cited the area's access to visitors from New York and Philadelphia. At the same time, Cleora's presenters discussed plans for a destination of 3D-printed homes featuring a standing wave. **IAQI**



CALIFORNIA RECOGNIZES OPENWATER LIFEGUARDS AS FIRST RESPONDERS

California's Legislature has unanimously approved a statewide resolution recognizing open-water lifeguards as first responders.

The resolution applies to open-water lifeguards employed by state, county, municipal, and district agencies throughout California. While it does not change state law or automatically extend first-responder benefits, it states the Legislature's formal position that these professionals meet the classification's duties.

"California's open-water lifeguards ... serve and protect beaches and lakes across the state and conduct aquatic rescues, respond to medical emergencies and traffic collisions, execute tactical extrications, and more, all of which fall under the tenets of a first responder classification," the resolution states.

It also cites the profession's record since 2000: open-water lifeguards have protected more than 4.5 billion patrons, performed more than 96 million preventive actions or incident-mitigation measures, and carried out more than 1.4 million rescues.

The resolution further states that open-water lifeguards attend to, treat, assist, and transport victims during emergencies, fulfilling the four duties assigned to emergency-response employees under U.S. code.

The measure follows a campaign by California open-water lifeguarding associations, which referred to the profession as the "Forgotten First Responder." Supporters said the resolution could help address inconsistencies in how agencies have previously classified open-water lifeguards; some state and local agencies already recognize them as first responders, while others do not.

A similar measure is pending at the federal level. House Resolution 1188 was introduced in April and assigned to a committee, but it has not advanced further. **IAQI**

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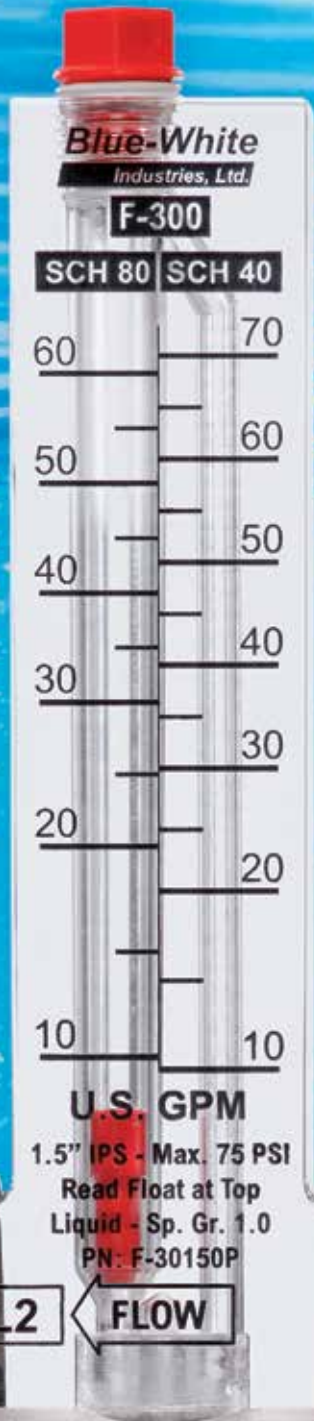
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Lean In-service: High-quality CPR

Two 15-minute drills for adult emergency readiness

By Pete DeQuincy

To increase the chances of survival for individuals in cardiac arrest, lifeguards must gain proficiency and endurance in delivering high-quality CPR. The following is a review of some of the objectives that the American Heart Association (AHA) encourages teams to strive to achieve and perfect:

- Begin compressions within 10 seconds after recognizing cardiac arrest
- Compress the chest hard, and compress it fast; around 100–120 compressions/minute
- Compress the chest to a depth of at least 2 in. but no more than 2.4 in. for adults, approximately 2 in. for children, and approximately 1.5 in. for infants
- Allow for complete recoil of the chest after each compression
- Minimize interruptions during compressions
- Give effective breaths, with the delivery of each breath being roughly one second, and each breath providing enough volume to make the chest rise

The two in-services below focus on developing proficiency, speed, and endurance when providing CPR to an adult Guest in Distress (GID) found on land. The first in-service focuses

on building proficiency and endurance for the solo rescuer. The second is designed for two-person rescue teams, when both guards arrive on scene simultaneously. It focuses on building teamwork and incorporating the use of an automatic external defibrillator (AED).

The Lean format

These drills are of the Lean In-Service variety, meaning they only take 15 minutes. These are designed to maximize time while isolating and focusing on one small skill. The chart below shows how these are formatted, with each component described.

Summary of the 15-minute in-service framework

15-MINUTE IN-SERVICE: Topic		
Introduction	1 minute	
Skill #1	3 minutes	Benchmark to be achieved
Skill #2	3 minutes	Benchmark to be achieved
Skill #3	3 minutes	Benchmark to be achieved
Skill #4	3 minutes	Benchmark to be achieved
Closing	2 minutes	

PHOTOS BY PETE DEQUINCY

Introduction

The introduction should provide the set-up and explanation of the first skill or activity.

Skills

Skill blocks should focus on developing one specific skill.

Closing

Allows the trainer to provide feedback to lifeguards on their skills, the trainer's goal, and how the in-service aligns with overall job duties.

Benchmarks

This module outlines what the trainer hopes to achieve within the skill block. This can include a specific skill acquired or a timing goal to be met.

15-MINUTE IN-SERVICE: HIGH-QUALITY CPR – ADULT ON LAND

Introduction: High-quality CPR for a solo rescuer Note: This in-service should be conducted continuously without a break.	1 minute	Provide a brief explanation and demonstrate the rescuer's position in relation to the CPR manikin.
Skill #1—One rescuer will provide a primary assessment, followed by 30 seconds of CPR Provide one rescuer and one resuscitation mask for each CPR manikin. The manikin should be equipped to provide real-time data and feedback on the rescuer's CPR performance.	3 minutes 3 reps minimum, striving for 4 reps or more	Benchmark: Rescuer can successfully perform a primary assessment, activate EMS, and provide one cycle of CPR (30 compressions and two effective ventilations).
Interlude activity —Assign a different CPR manikin for Skill #2.	10 seconds	Benchmark: The rescuer should move quickly to another CPR manikin.
Skill #2—One rescuer will provide a primary assessment followed by 1 minute of CPR. Provide one rescuer and one resuscitation mask for each CPR manikin. Manikins should provide feedback to the rescuer.	3 minutes 2 reps minimum	Benchmark: Rescuer can successfully perform a primary assessment, activate EMS, and provide one minute of CPR (2 to 3 cycles).



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Interlude activity —Assign a different CPR manikin for Skill #3.	10 seconds	Benchmark: The rescuer should move quickly to another manikin.
Skill #3 —One rescuer will provide a primary assessment, followed by 2 minutes of CPR. Provide one rescuer and one resuscitation mask for each CPR manikin. Manikins should provide feedback to the rescuer.	3 minutes 1 rep	Benchmark: Rescuer can successfully perform a primary assessment, activate EMS, and provide 2 minutes of CPR (5 cycles).
Interlude activity —Assign a different CPR manikin for Skill #4.	10 seconds	Benchmark: The rescuer should move quickly to another manikin.
Skill #4 —One rescuer will provide a primary assessment followed by 2 minutes of CPR. Provide one rescuer and one resuscitation mask for each CPR manikin. Simulated patients should provide feedback to the rescuer.	3 minutes 1 rep	Benchmark: Rescuer can successfully perform a primary assessment, activate EMS, and provide 2 minutes of CPR (5 cycles).
Closing	2 minutes	Provide feedback and remind lifeguards how the training aligns with effective care for the GID.

15-MINUTE IN-SERVICE: TWO-RESCUER CPR/AED		
Introduction: High-quality CPR for a two-person rescue team that arrives on scene for an unresponsive GID on land. A training AED, radio, or mobile phone will be utilized.	1 minute	Provide a brief explanation and demonstrate the rescuers' roles, tasks, and body positions around the CPR manikin.
Skill #1—Calling 911 Provide two rescuers and two resuscitation masks for each CPR manikin. Manikins should be made to provide data and feedback to the rescuers. Also provide one training AED and a radio or mobile phone for activating 911.	3 minutes 4 reps minimum, striving for 6 reps or more Rescuer 1—caller Rescuer 2—911 dispatcher After 1 rep, rescuers will switch roles and repeat.	Benchmark: A rescuer calling 911 should be able to identify themselves and the location of the emergency, describe the nature of the emergency, explain what is being done for the GID, what resources are needed, and the best access point to reach the GID. This should be done clearly and calmly.
Skill #2 —Rescuers will provide a primary assessment, activation of EMS, and 1 minute of CPR. Provide two rescuers and two resuscitation masks for each CPR manikin. Manikins should provide feedback to the rescuers. Also provide one training AED and a radio or mobile phone for activating 911.	3 minutes 2 reps minimum, strive for 3 reps, switch roles between reps. Rescuer #1 —provides a primary assessment, determines GID is in cardiac arrest, and begins CPR. Rescuer #2 —contacts 911	Benchmark: Rescuers can successfully perform a primary assessment, activate EMS, and provide 1 minute of CPR (2 to 3 cycles).
Interlude activity —Assign a new CPR manikin and switch rescuer roles for skill #3.	10 seconds	Benchmark: Rescuers should move quickly to another manikin.
Skill #3 —Rescuers will provide a primary assessment, activate EMS, apply an AED, and perform 2 minutes of CPR. Provide two rescuers and two resuscitation masks for each CPR manikin. Manikins should provide feedback to the rescuers. Also have one training AED and a radio or mobile phone available for activating 911.	3 minutes 1 rep Rescuer #1 —provides a primary assessment, determines GID is in cardiac arrest, and begins CPR. Rescuer #2 —contacts 911, brings AED, applies AED pads to GID, operates AED.	Benchmark: Rescuers can successfully perform a primary assessment, activate EMS, use the AED, and provide 2 minutes of CPR (5 cycles).
Interlude activity —Assign a new CPR manikin and switch rescuer roles for skill #4.	10 seconds	Benchmark: Rescuers should move quickly to another manikin.
Skill #4 —Rescuers will provide a primary assessment, activate EMS, use an AED, and perform 2 minutes of CPR. Provide two rescuers and two resuscitation masks for each CPR manikin. Manikins should provide feedback to the rescuers. Also have one training AED and a radio or mobile phone for activating 911 available.	3 minutes 1 rep Rescuer #1 —provides a primary assessment, determines that GID is in cardiac arrest, and begins CPR. Rescuer #2 —contacts 911, brings AED, applies AED pads to GID, operates AED.	Benchmark: Rescuers can successfully perform a primary assessment, activate EMS, and provide 2 minutes of CPR (5 cycles).
Closing	2 minutes	Provide feedback and remind lifeguards how the training aligns with effective care for the GID.

The Lean In-service provides opportunities for the trainer to identify gaps or rough spots that might require an additional training block or a repeat of an existing block (skill refresher/polish).

Things to consider as the trainer

A critical eye is essential for trainers to ensure lifeguards meet established benchmarks. They must keep the following considerations carefully in mind to ensure that the in-service training is successful:

- The trainer should provide clear directions and visual demonstrations.
- They must ensure that the training equipment is in working order and have backups available.
- The trainer should gain proficiency in all skills before the in-service.
- Time management should be prioritized, as it is easy to exceed the time limit.
- It is acceptable to repeat a skill block if necessary.
- The trainer should focus on less talking and more interaction to keep the lifeguards engaged.

Common mistakes seen during in-service

- The rescuers take too long to start care for the GID.
- Rescuers do not give sufficient information to 911.
- There is a lack of communication among rescuers during the multi-rescuer skill blocks.
- Rescuers do not correct one another during the skill blocks when necessary.

CPR Training Priorities

- Start care quickly.
- Compress at 100–120/minute.
- Allow full recoil; minimize pauses.
- Communicate with 911 and teammates.
- Use the AED efficiently.
- Switch compressors; repeat weak skills. | **AQI**

Remember: Providing effective, high-quality CPR requires each rescuer to build endurance, switch roles providing compressions every few minutes, and ensure transitions are smooth and quick. Rescuers should be comfortable communicating with each other about what they need to provide appropriate care for the GID, and be able to communicate with Police, Fire, and EMS during the emergency. The actions taken by rescuers and their teams can make a difference.

Good luck and keep training. | **AQI**



Pete DeQuincy is the aquatics manager at East Bay Regional Park District in Oakland, Calif. He is an American Red Cross instructor trainer in water safety, lifeguarding, and emergency medical response.

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Preventive Maintenance Starts with Assessment

Identify maintenance gaps and prepare stronger budget requests

By Juliene Hefter, executive director and CEO,
and Kirsten Barnes, assistant director,
Association of Aquatic Professionals (AOAP)

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is the first in a three-part series designed to help aquatic professionals take a proactive approach to facility stewardship. The series explores how to evaluate a preventive maintenance program, develop a long-term capital improvement plan, and communicate these needs in ways that help secure organizational support and funding. Whether managing a new facility or one with decades of deferred maintenance, aquatic professionals can use these practical steps to move from reacting to problems to planning for long-term success.

Few things pose a larger challenge for aquatic directors than securing the funding for preventive maintenance and capital improvement. Whether they answer to a government entity such as a city council or a board of directors, aquatic directors must convince a group of people who are not fluent in aquatics-speak that a project will benefit the community or clients enough to warrant a place in their budget.

Before requesting additional resources, aquatic professionals should understand where their facilities stand today. That starts with developing and committing to plans for preventive maintenance and capital improvement.

Preventive maintenance is one of the most important responsibilities of an aquatic professional, but it can often go overlooked. When done well, it extends equipment lifespan, improves operational reliability, reduces emergency repairs, and helps create a safer environment for guests and staff. Yet preventive maintenance is often the first thing to fall behind when facilities must balance limited budgets, staffing shortages, and the day-to-day demands of keeping programs running.

The reality is that preventive maintenance is about far more than checking boxes on an inspection form. This first article walks through a practical process for evaluating a current preventive maintenance program, identifying gaps, and creating the documentation needed to support long-term planning. Down the road, this will help aquatic professionals build a budget and justify it to their governing bodies.



ASSESS THE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE PLAN

Aquatic professionals should start by reviewing their existing preventive maintenance programs. Are they documented?

A strong preventive maintenance plan constitutes more than a collection of work orders or even a maintenance calendar. It should comprise a documented system that outlines what needs to be maintained, when it should be completed, who is responsible, how the work should be performed, and how it will

Aquatics teams should not only perform regular inspections of equipment, structures, and systems, but should also develop an iron-clad system for documenting these regular assessments.



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As with anything else, assuring user safety should take the highest priority in your maintenance approach. For this reason, systems, equipment, and tools that play a critical role in user health and safety should be tested and checked even more frequently than strictly required.

be documented. The goal is consistency: If another manager or technician stepped into the role tomorrow, they should be able to pick up the plan and step right in where the previous manager or technician left off.

The most effective plans will include these five essential components:

1. Facility asset inventory: This includes mechanical equipment (things that make the pool run, such as pumps, feeders, filters, etc.), aquatic infrastructure (the components of the pool and pool area, such as decking, gutters, the pool shell), and building systems (HVAC, dehumidifiers, etc.). Where possible, aquatic professionals should include manufacturer information, model and serial numbers, installation dates, location, and replacement cost.

2. Scheduled maintenance tasks: Aquatic professionals should build a calendar with daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual tasks to transform maintenance from something to remember to something that is managed and under control. Maintenance intervals should be drawn from manufacturer recommendations.

3. Clearly assigned responsibilities: For every task, aquatic professionals should specify who performs it, who verifies completion, what qualifications might be required, and when to enlist an outside contractor. By creating accountability within the plan, important tasks are less likely to fall through the cracks.

4. Standard operating procedures: The plan should link to step-by-step procedures or manufacturer instructions. Aquatic professionals should consider including the tools or personal protective equipment (PPE) needed, safety precautions, and lockout/tagout procedures.

5. Documentation and recordkeeping: Maintenance activities should be documented consistently so inspections, repairs, and follow-up actions can be tracked over time.

PRO TIP: Think of inspections as the “early warning system” for a preventive maintenance program. The issues professionals identify today often become the projects they will prioritize in tomorrow’s capital improvement plan.



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The strongest preventive maintenance plans are implemented with highly documented systems that outline what to maintain and when, who holds responsibility, how the work should be performed, and how it will be documented.

ASSESS PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Even the most comprehensive preventive maintenance plan has little value without consistent implementation. A successful program depends on completing maintenance tasks as scheduled, documenting the work performed, and verifying that responsibilities are being fulfilled. When routine maintenance is postponed or overlooked, small issues can quickly become larger repairs, emergency failures, or safety concerns.

Aquatic professionals should establish realistic maintenance schedules that reflect their staffing levels and operational demands. They should assign clear responsibility for both completing and verifying each task. Regularly reviewing completed work orders and inspection records can help identify missed tasks, recurring delays, or areas where additional resources or training may be needed. Consistency and accountability will transform a maintenance plan from a document on a shelf into a reliable system that protects a facility and extends the life of its assets.

PRO TIP: Every facility has items that have become “part of the scenery”—the peeling paint, the patched concrete, the noisy pump, the broken gate latch that has been on the work order list for months. When familiarity causes aquatic professionals to stop seeing problems that deserve attention, it is a sign of facility blindness. During an annual assessment, they should intentionally look at the facility through the eyes of someone seeing it for the first time. This can prove to be one of the most valuable exercises during the assessment.

EVALUATE MAINTENANCE RECORDS

Completing preventive maintenance is only half the equation; documenting it is equally important. Organized maintenance records provide a history of inspections, repairs, and recurring issues that can help identify trends, support warranty claims, demonstrate regulatory compliance, and justify future budget requests. They also ensure that valuable institutional knowledge is not lost when staff members change roles or leave the organization.

A documentation system does not have to be complicated, but it should be consistent and easy to access. Whether aquatic professionals use a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS), spreadsheets, or paper records, documentation should include the date of service, equipment or asset serviced, work performed, observations, repairs completed, parts replaced, follow-up recommendations, and the person who completed the work. Inspection reports, manufacturer manuals, warranties, service contracts, and major repair records should also be organized in a central location for quick reference when needed.

Many facility managers discover that maintenance activities occur but are not formally documented. Others find that responsibilities are spread among multiple departments without clear accountability. Identifying these issues early provides a foundation for improvement.

REVIEW MANUFACTURER RECOMMENDATIONS

While every facility operates under different conditions, manufacturer recommendations provide an excellent starting point. From there, aquatic professionals can adjust maintenance frequencies based on operating hours, water chemistry, environmental conditions, and the facility’s experience with the equipment. Using these recommendations can help maximize performance and extend equipment life.

INSPECT CRITICAL SAFETY SYSTEMS

While every piece of equipment deserves attention, some play a direct role in protecting health and safety. Critical safety systems might

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include chemical control and disinfection systems, emergency shut-off switches, circulation and filtration, main drain covers, fencing and gates, and fire protection systems, among others. Professionals should give these systems additional attention through routine inspections, functional testing, and thorough documentation.

The appropriate inspection frequency will depend on the equipment, manufacturer recommendations, regulatory requirements, and the organization's policies. Some items, such as rescue equipment and chemical safety systems, may require daily visual inspections, while others are inspected weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually. Rather than relying on memory, aquatic professionals should incorporate these inspections into a documented preventive maintenance schedule so they occur consistently.

LOOKING AHEAD

A well-designed preventive maintenance program does more than keep equipment running: it creates the structure, documentation, and consistency needed to make informed decisions about a facility's future. By taking the time to evaluate current practices, strengthen accountability, and maintain accurate records, aquatic professionals will be better prepared to identify long-term needs before they become costly emergencies.

The next article in this series will build on this foundation by exploring how to develop a capital improvement plan. Aquatic professionals will learn how to evaluate the condition and remaining useful life of major assets, prioritize replacement projects, and create a long-term roadmap to help their organization plan ahead rather than react to the next equipment failure. | **AQI**



Juliene Hefter is executive director and CEO of the Association of Aquatic Professionals (AOAP) and the owner of Safety First Aquatics, an aquatic safety and educational company based in Goodyear, Ariz.

She has appeared in *Aquatics International's* Power issue and received the Paragon Award from the International Swimming Hall of Fame (ISHOF), among other recognitions.



Kirsten Barnes is the assistant director at AOAP. She has participated in many facets of recreation and aquatics and managed programs serving a variety of populations. She oversaw

lifeguard management at 24 aquatic facilities and waterparks for a private management company, then operated a private fitness and wellness center. She has spoken at educational conferences and trained frontline teams at facilities throughout the country.



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WATER WELCOMES ALL

Sahuarita splash pad fosters inclusive community

By Sylvia Bucklew

The splash pad design includes navigable surfaces for strollers, wheelchairs, and walkers to ensure full accessibility.

PHOTOS COURTESY TOWN OF SAHUARITA



An inclusive splash pad now anchors the enhancements to Anamax Park, giving families and residents a welcoming place to cool off and play together. Designed for people of all ages and abilities, the new feature reflects a commitment to accessible recreation and the growing demand for inclusive public spaces.

This addition comes as part of ongoing development in the Town of Sahuarita, located just south of Tucson, Ariz., which has expanded by more than 780 percent over the past two decades, and is now home to nearly 38,000 residents. Recognizing this need, the town enhanced its largest and oldest recreational space with a new feature for families and residents to enjoy—the town's very first splash pad.

With no standing water and a wide range of spray effects, splash pads are among the most inclusive forms of aquatic play, offering a welcoming experience for users of all ages and abilities. Splash pads are also valuable additions to communities facing intense summer heat and frequent heat warnings, offering residents a safe and refreshing way to cool down.

The design of the Anamax Park splash pad emphasizes accessibility. The installation includes water and spray features that are usable by all ages, fostering inclusive play. All surfaces are accessible to strollers, wheelchairs, or walkers, and the space welcomes individuals with sensory, auditory, behavioral, or physical challenges to play either alongside others or independently.



Cactus-shaped aquatic play elements provide thematic features that enhance the splash pad's interactive design.

ENGAGING PLAY ELEMENTS

The splash pad features a variety of themed aquatic play elements designed to spark imagination and encourage interactive fun. Children can engage with desert-inspired creatures such as a gila monster, lizard, rattlesnake, and scorpion, as well as playful elements shaped like a cactus and desert flower. These are paired with additional aquatic features such as rock-like structures that create rainfall effects and a tall cactus centerpiece that towers over the play area. These themed splash pad elements are complemented by a variety of additional play features, including coiled water sprays, worm-like sprayers, solar-inspired spinners, and shimmering water screens, that add multi-sensory engagement through spray effects and dynamic motion. The overall look and feel of the space draws direct inspiration from the Arizona desert, with playful nods to

Children engage with desert creatures like lizards and rattlesnakes incorporated into aquatic play features.



local wildlife and natural landscapes that give the splash pad its unique character.

Adding to the interactivity are water cannons that allow users to control the flow by adjusting the angle, along with ground sprays that create a basket-weave pattern across the splash pad surface. For high-energy fun, large overhead dump features release cascades of water from multiple directions, particularly ideal for older children seeking a thrilling soak. A four-bucket clover configuration provides 360-degree splashes, allowing more participants to easily join in the experience.

Incorporating features like water curtains, misters, and bubblers can provide a variety of tactile experiences that can be enjoyable for people with sensory processing disorders. Cognitive and developmental stages shape how each child processes sensory experiences. It is therefore important to have zones with lower water use that progress through a sequencing path. Many elements are available, making play sequencing an engaging attraction. One can start with a range of bubblers and water-weaving features to create visually interesting patterns, which draw users into the splash pad without the fear of being confronted with a lot of water all at once.

Inclusive play recognizes the need for distinct “zones” within the splash pad, ensuring safe enjoyment for users of all ages, both independently and interactively. Some areas are designed for full soaking, others for light splashing, and zones with water cannons cater to high-energy participants such as teenagers. Along the edges, quieter spaces are available for those who prefer solitary play.

SUSTAINABLE WATER SYSTEMS

Water is a finite resource in many communities. To support conservation, this particular splash pad is equipped with a recirculating filtration system that ensures efficient water use, reliable distribution, and consistent performance across all aquatic play features.

This system not only promotes sustainability through water reuse but also enhances the safety and functionality of the aquatic play space. The recirculation system ensures that all splash pad features maintain adequate water pressure while conserving water.



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Themed play elements, including animals and flowers, spark imagination and encourage interactive fun.



Rock-like spray features create rainfall effects and tactile water interactions across the splash pad.



Large overhead dump features release cascading water for high-energy play and thrilling soak experiences.

In the past, many cities chose flow-through systems, also known as single-pass or drain-to-waste designs, when constructing public water features, partly because their upfront costs were lower than those of recirculating systems. Today, with greater emphasis on water conservation, more municipalities are converting to recirculating systems to reduce overall water use.

Splash pads with recirculating systems operate much like pools, using chemicals, filters, and pumps to maintain water quality. Water is supplied to the play area from a holding tank sized at approximately four to five times the system's flow rate.

In addition to the pumps, filters, chemical feed, and sanitation elements needed to treat the water, recirculation systems include:

- A main drain to collect all water and send it to the tank and/or waste
- An underground water reservoir tank prefabricated and pre-plumbed

The installation also requires a lockable utility cover to keep equipment out of patrons' reach.

INCLUSIVE FUN FOR EVERYONE

This project was a collaborative effort between the Town of Sahuarita, Altitude Recreation, Water Odyssey, and AquaWorx, all working together to bring this new amenity to life. A splash pad or water play area can serve as a gathering place for people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds to relax and connect through the joy of water. Beyond offering fun and adventure, the inherently inclusive design of a splash pad also supports the community's diverse physical and cognitive needs. The Anamax Park splash pad is more than a place to cool off; it symbolizes community growth, creativity, and inclusive play for the town's residents. **IAQI**



Sylvia Bucklew is a marketing professional with seven years of experience in the aquatic play equipment manufacturing industry. She has played a key role in showcasing innovative aquatic play projects and supporting initiatives that deliver interactive, inclusive aquatic experiences to communities, resorts, and recreation centers.

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Anchor Industries, Inc.

Product: Palm Funbrella

Features: The Palm Funbrella shade structure brings a tropical palm tree design to pools, water parks, splash pads, and outdoor recreation areas. Built with a steel frame and durable mesh fabric, it provides dependable shade, helping guests stay cooler and more comfortable while creating a resort-style setting.

Contact: anchorinc.com/products/shade/funbrella/funbrella-palm



Aquatic Development Group

Product: WaveTek

Features: WaveTek wave generation equipment has more than 550 installations worldwide; crafted with precision at ADG's headquarters in New York; every system undergoes rigorous manufacturing processes and strict quality control measures; a wide range of applications, including wave pools, action rivers, and more.

Contact: wavetekwaves.com



Ellis & Associates

Product: EllisDocs

Features: A new, easy-to-use app for aquatic facility management; issue and track checklists, daily inspections, chemical levels, rescue reports, and more—from the palm of your hand.

Contact: ellisdocs.com



Herborner Pumps US

Product: herborner.X-N Circulation Pump

Features: The herborner.X-N is a 100-percent coated circulation pump with an integrated pre-filter. Its vertical, space-saving design fits tight equipment rooms while supporting low-maintenance operation and long-term endurance. Engineered for reliable pool circulation, the pump is designed to operate with minimal noise.

Contact: wcg.de



OpenAire

Product: Custom Aluminum Retractable Roof Enclosures and Skylights

Features: OpenAire is the world's premier supplier of custom aluminum retractable roof enclosures and skylights, trusted by public and private developers. With 35+ years and 1,300+ projects worldwide, we design, manufacture, and install corrosion-free, low-maintenance structures for aquatic centers, waterparks, resorts, and community facilities. Our retractable roofs cut energy costs and elevate guest experience in any climate.

Contact: openaire.com



Vortex Aquatic Structures

Product: Elevations™ by Vortex

Features: Elevations™ is a multilevel aquatic play structure designed for guests of all ages. It can transform an underused wading pool or replace an aging attraction with a space-efficient play destination. Featuring interactive games, slides, and dynamic water effects, the structure encourages movement, exploration, and social connection. Customizable themes, colors, and configurations allow it to fit virtually any space or project vision, while safe, *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*-compliant access options support inclusive play for guests of all abilities.

Contact: vortex-intl.com



Recreonics

Product: Wibit LevelPass Modular Play Inflatable

Features: The Wibit LevelPass adds a challenging bridge-style obstacle to compatible Wibit inflatable pool combinations. Participants brace their hands and feet against opposing arches while moving across an anti-slip surface, requiring balance, core strength, and coordination. Its modular design encourages repeat attempts and adds a new level of challenge to aquatic play areas.

Contact: recreonics.com/product/wibit-levelpass-modular-play-product



WhiteWater

Product: Aquadrenaline

Features: A unique aquatic play experience that allows kids and teens to climb, jump, and swing over a pool, and sometimes into it, from platform to platform.

Contact: whitewaterwest.com



Bradley Corp.

Product: Phenolic Lockers

Features: Designed to be water- and moisture-resistant for use in wet environments and tough conditions; the lockers' resistance to moisture helps prevent the growth of mold and mildew, while a smooth nonporous finish ensures a hygienic, easy-to-clean, and low-maintenance solution in locker rooms.

Contact: bradleycorp.com



Kendall Products

Product: Dri-Dek

Features: Flexible, anti-skid, and self-draining surface keeps feet and floors dry; use in pool areas, showers, locker rooms, and barefoot walkways; made from anti-microbial oxy-B1 vinyl to help control bacteria, mold, and mildew; snap the 12-by-12-inch interlocking tiles together to form a surface of any length, width, or shape.

Contact: dri-dek.com



JED Pool Tools

Product: Easi™ Ladder Anchor Saver

Features: Designed for pool winterizing; protects pool ladder anchors and sockets from the damaging effects of winter weather and ice; simply stick it into the anchor hole to protect the anchor opening all winter long; made in the USA.

Contact: JEDPoolTools.com



Landmark Aquatic

Product: Life Floor Surfacing

Features: Landmark Aquatic installs Life Floor slip-resistant, cushioned, NSF-certified surfacing for pools, splash pads, and waterparks. As a Registered Aquatic Partner and Certified Installer, the company provides a renovation option for aging or deteriorating deck surfaces, helping facilities create safer, more comfortable, and inclusive aquatic environments.

Contact: landmarkaquatic.com

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Landscape Drains

Product: 7000 Series Slot Drain

Features: The 7000 Series Slot Drain is a pre-sloped linear drainage solution for plazas, patios, and pool decks. It handles up to 27 GPM and offers ADA-compliant options. Custom throat extensions match paver or tile heights, while an integrated catch basin and strainer basket collect debris to help prevent clogs.

Contact: landscapedrains.com



Natare Pools

Product: Natatec® PVC Membrane Pool Lining System

Features: The Natatec PVC Membrane Pool Lining System creates a watertight surface over cracks, joints, and deteriorating commercial pool shells. Custom-cut membranes install quickly, require minimal maintenance, and provide a slip-resistant surface comfortable for bare feet. The system extends the service life of aging pools and can be paired with stainless steel gutters for complete renovations.

Contact: natare.com



Magic Plastics

Product: QwikLED Lighting Adaptor Plate

Features: The QwikLED lighting adaptor plate enables aquatic facilities to replace older incandescent pool lights with energy-efficient LED lighting. Designed to simplify pool-light renovations, the adaptor plate provides a cost-effective upgrade option and is available in three colors to match pool interiors. A new spa-size option is also available.

Contact: magicplastics.com



Recreonics

Product: RAMUC HB 31 Hi Build Epoxy Pool Coating

Features: RAMUC HB 31 is a 3:1 high-build epoxy coating for indoor and outdoor swimming pools. It cures to a satin finish and dries to 8 mils, helping smooth rough surfaces. Two coats provide up to 8 years of service life, covering 150–200 square feet per gallon on bare, sandblasted, or rough surfaces.

Contact: recreonics.com/product/ramuc-hb31-high-build-epoxy-coating-4-gal-kit/



RENOLIT

Product: RENOLIT SOLID

Features: Reinforced PVC membrane created for splash pads and aquatic facility decks; 80-mil-thick membrane renovates deck surfaces to make them waterproof and slip-resistant for safety, and provides long-term ease of maintenance.

Contact: renolit-alkorplan.com



Sider-Crete, Inc.

Product: Roll-On Pool Plaster/Sider-Proof FF-PR

Features: Roll-On Pool Plaster is a cement-based resurfacing coating for existing plaster, marcite, gunite, concrete, and block pools. Packaged as a kit, it can be applied with a standard paint roller and smoothed with a MagicTrowel. The coating is suitable for commercial and residential renovations, new construction, hot tubs, and chlorine or saltwater systems.

Contact: sider-crete.com



RicoRock

Product: Custom GFRC Rock Systems

Features: RicoRock glass-fiber-reinforced concrete rock systems help aquatic facilities renovate with custom waterfalls, water features, seating, and themed environments. Steel-reinforced construction provides a lighter-weight alternative to natural stone while offering more predictable installation and lower material costs. The systems are manufactured in the USA.

Contact: ricorock.com



Water Odyssey

Product: Splash pads, custom theming/waterparks, and fountains

Features: Aquatic play equipment for spray parks, water parks, and aquatic facilities; create unique water play experiences that promote inclusion, socialization, learning, and family fun.

Contact: waterodyssey.com



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Final Destination

An alpine rooftop retreat crowns a canyon-inspired high-rise



Rooftop pools tend to serve as the crowning glory for a high-rise. But they usually stand alone in their luxury and spectacle.

But this project took the rooftop pool to the next level: it literally caps off and completes the narrative begun by the building itself. The team that created One River North sought to create a microcosm that represents the many types of ecosystems and varieties of nature found in Colorado. They wanted to transport residents away from the city.

The building's facade includes a canyon-like void, with terraces, pathways, plantings, water, and outdoor rooms meant to evoke Colorado's foothills and alpine terrain. To create a sense of journey, open-air experiences are staggered throughout the four-story canyon, with a trail that winds up the side of the building, resembling a walk through the Rocky Mountains, featuring a waterfall, landscape, and common-area amenities. The rooftop aquatic zone literally caps the experience.

"This makes the pool and spa part of an architectural journey, not a disconnected endpoint," explained the designers with Aquatic Design Group, which is based in Carlsbad, Calif. "The rooftop pool and spa are not just luxury add-ons. They ultimately complete the larger narrative of moving from the city upward through a planted canyon to an alpine-inspired retreat with sweeping views of the Denver skyline and Rocky Mountains."

The aquatic space on the roof includes a swimming pool, spa, sundeck, private seating areas, and garden space, all oriented to frame views of the Rocky Mountains and the Denver skyline. A lighter color palette, evergreen landscaping, and dramatic lighting are meant to transport users to an alpine environment and mood. | **AQI**

—Rebecca Robledo

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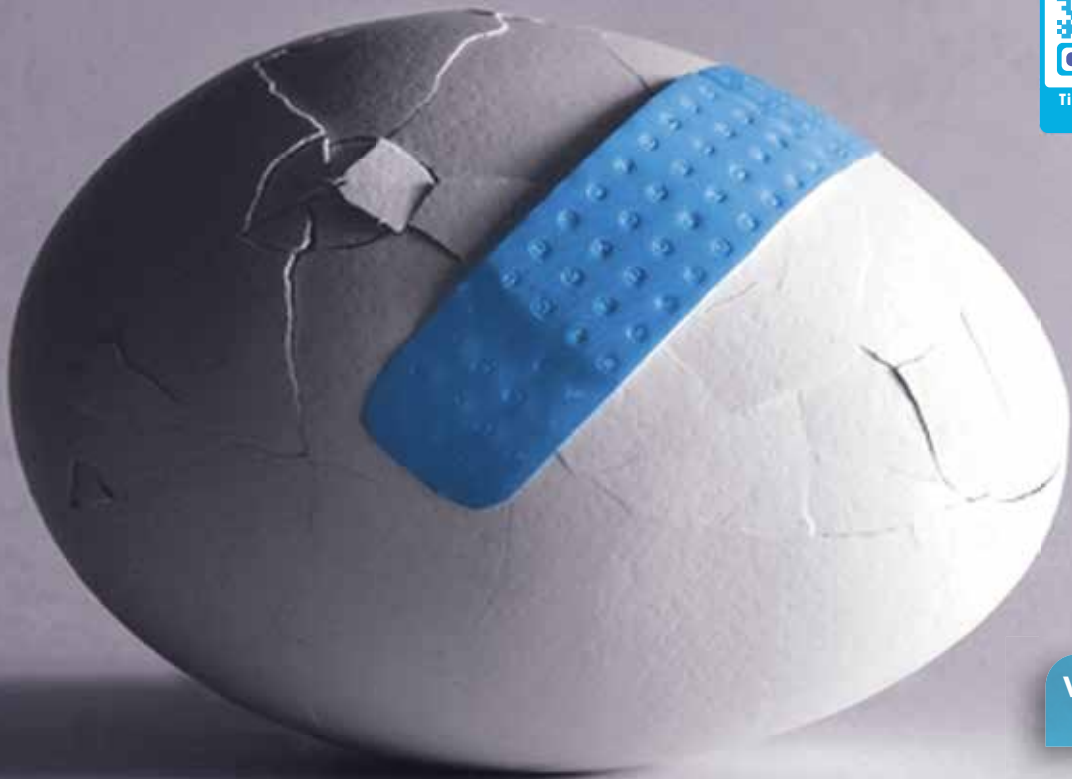
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