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<b>Health and Safety Executive</b>		<b>Sector Information Minute</b>	
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Target Audience:

FOD Inspectors with responsibility for entertainment and services industries

## HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SWIMMING POOLS

This SIM provides advice following a number of queries received by inspectors, the Food and Entertainment Sector and others about the HSC publication *Managing health and safety in swimming pools (HSG179)*.

### BACKGROUND

1 A number of queries have been received from inspectors, local authority (LA) inspectors and pool operators about the guidance contained in the recent HSC publication *Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools*. Many pool operators will have contact with or be members of organisations such as the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management or the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Managers but others will not have access to the information that membership of an institute or association provides.

2 The queries have covered topics as diverse as the size of pool outlet grilles and the slope of pool bottoms.

3 There appears to be confusion regarding the status and requirements of the guidance.

### ENFORCEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

4 Swimming pools are found in both HSE (eg Schools, LA leisure centres) and LA (eg hotels and holiday centres) enforced premises. Pools can range from the very small to competition sized.

### STATUS OF GUIDANCE

5 HSG179 was published in 1999 following extensive consultation between HSE and interested parties. It represents best practices and standards that the industry agrees are reasonably practicable. The recommendations are **not retrospective** as proactive action is the best way of ensuring health and safety.

6 It is reasonable to expect that swimming pools designed and built following the publication of HSG179 meet the recommendations on physical layout.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF SWIMMING POOL OPERATORS

7 Operators are required to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of their

operations and to identify necessary control measures. A suitable and sufficient risk assessment would have to take account of the whole user population of the swimming pool and that drowning can occur very quickly indeed. HSG179 does not alter this duty. Operators should take into account the guidance in HSG179 when deciding appropriate control measures.

8 HSG179 does not, of itself, require any retrospective physical alterations to swimming pools. An operator's risk assessment may identify that there is a significant risk of harm to a person arising from the physical environment of their pool. In this case, they should consider physical alterations as one of the possible solutions to the problem. It should be noted that due to the construction of some pools, it may not be reasonably practicable to make physical alterations to the pool itself. Where existing pool gradients do not meet the recommendations of HSG179, then additional risk reduction measures, such as increased supervision, barriers, signage, etc, should be considered and HSG179 gives further information on this. If these are not reasonably practicable, or the residual risk is still considered to be unacceptable, then re-profiling may be necessary.

9 Some operators have argued that the provision of additional life guards may be sufficient to ensure an acceptable standard of health and safety rather than making physical alterations. Drownings have occurred in the past where the victim has not been spotted. Because drowning can occur so rapidly, it is the Sector's view that additional life guards may not in themselves provide adequate safeguards.

#### ACTION BY INSPECTORS

10 11 Inspectors should ensure that pool operators carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, that significant risks are identified and that appropriate risk control measures are identified and implemented. Inspectors should use HSG179 in judging the suitability of the risk control measures that are identified. If the guidance has been followed when identifying and implementing control measures then operators should be doing enough to meet their legal obligations, though other controls may be acceptable based on levels of risk.

#### ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT MODEL

11 Much of the guidance in HSG179 concerns the safety of the public. If inadequate risk control measures are in place, then there can be a significant risk of serious injury to members of the public. In determining what risk controls to implement, there is considerable dependence on the user population. For example, HSG179 recommends a gap of 8 mm in outlet grilles to minimise the risk of entrapment however in a toddlers splash pool such a gap size may not provide adequate protection and so a smaller gap size should be considered.

12 The standards outlined in HSG179 are best regarded as established for the purposes of EMM.

#### ENQUIRIES

13 Within FOD, the Food and Entertainment Sector has lead responsibility for swimming pools. Enquiries about this SIM should be directed to the Entertainment Section of the Sector at the Glasgow Office, e-mail Area21, FOD Entertainment Section.

14 Requests for technical advice and assistance should in the first instance be referred to the local specialist group.

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