



Is Your Splash Pad Safe?

The family of a deceased 6-year-old boy believed he was exposed to an amoeba, either from a water hose at his home or from a splash pad he visited. A city splash pad was closed after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed the splash pad storage tank created an environment for a “brain-eating” microscopic amoeba, known as *Naegleria Fowleri* to grow. Although splash pads and interactive water features can appear as low risk, there can be inherent risks influenced by design, operational procedures, and best practices. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has rules for Public Interactive Water Features which can be found [here](#). For additional information on *Naegleria Fowleri* click [here](#). Be sure to refer to State and any local health rules, as well as manufacturer and installer guidelines.



Splash Pad Design:

- Splash pads should be constructed of materials which are inert, stable, nontoxic, and watertight.
- Ensure decks, walking, and play surfaces are slip resistant and properly sloped to prevent ponding or pooling of water.



Operational Procedures:

- Complete a thorough pre-season check of splash pads prior to opening.
- Daily compliance checks should include documented inspections per manufacturer recommendations/owner’s manual; ensure equipment is operating as designed. For a sample DSHS Public Interactive Water Feature Inspection Form, click [here](#).
- Perform chemical checks per state/local requirements, inspect walking/play surfaces, remove debris/trash, sanitize surfaces, and perform routine/preventative maintenance as necessary. Document all activities.
- Monitor electronic equipment and verify accuracy periodically. Dirty probes and sensors can give false readings.
- Empty, flush, and clean holding tanks, pipes, lines, filters, strainer baskets, and deck drains to ensure proper water quality and sanitation.
- Secure broken or damaged equipment and take the splash pad out of service until repairs are made.



Best Practices:

- Develop procedures and checklists for documentation of inspection, maintenance, and operational activities specific to each facility. Check with equipment manufacturers for samples and guidance.
- Budget for preventative maintenance, replacement parts/equipment.
- Train staff on maintenance, operations, inspections, and documentation requirements.
- Evaluate signage – splash pad rules and required DSHS signage. For Public Interactive Water Features and Fountains (PIWFs) regulatory guidelines, click [here](#).
- Inspect mechanical equipment – controls, disinfection mechanisms (primary and secondary), probes, spray nozzles/jets valves, filters, and pumps. Ensure all spray heads are functioning properly and pressure is within normal operating range.
- Secure splash pads to prevent after-hours access and use. Additional security by law enforcement or surveillance cameras may be a deterrent for misuse and vandalism. Encourage patrons to report damage, misuse, and other issues.