



# FAQs: Understanding the updated Public Pools Regulation



HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT

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In December 2024, the Ontario Ministry of Health introduced amendments to the [Public Pools Regulation \(565/90\)](#), which came into effect in January 2025.

These changes impact the operation of:

- 💧 **Public swimming pools (Class A and Class B facilities)**
- 💧 **Public spas (hot tubs)**
- 💧 **Class C facilities (e.g. wading pools, splash pads, floatation tanks etc.)**

The amended regulation also introduces requirements for newer pool types, such as:

- 💧 **Cold water pools**
- 💧 **Hot water pools**
- 💧 **Floatation pools**
- 💧 **Floatation tanks**

**This document is a overview of the requirements outlined in the regulation. For detailed information, please refer directly to Ontario Regulation 565 - Public Pools or contact your local public health inspector.**

Below is a summary of the key changes.



## Are there changes that affect the general requirements for Class A and Class B pools?

Yes, there are several changes that impact the general operation of Class A and Class B pools:

1. **Black disc requirement:** A black disc must be permanently affixed to the bottom of the pool at its deepest point.
2. **Broadened total alkalinity range:** The acceptable range for total alkalinity has been expanded to 60-180ppm.
3. **Increased total bromine range:** The acceptable range for total bromine has increased to 2-8 ppm. This applies where the pool is not a wave action pool.
4. **Shared notices:** Pools located in the immediate vicinity of one another may be able to share the required notices referenced in section 19 of the regulation, provided certain conditions outlined in the regulation are met.
5. **Shared emergency phone and safety equipment:** Emergency phone and safety equipment may also be shared between two pools, or one pool and one spa in the same immediate vicinity, provided the conditions set out in the regulation are met.

Additionally, the regulation includes specific requirements for new pool types such as cold water pools, floatation pools and hot water pools. In some cases, specific requirements for these pool types supersede the general requirements outlined above.



## Do the amended regulations include novel/new pool types?

Yes, the amended regulations have been expanded to include novel/new pool types such as cold plunge pools, hot water pools, floatation pools and floatation tanks.

These pool types now have specific requirements outlined in the regulation to address their unique characteristics and operational needs.

A pool must be first assessed to determine if it falls under the classification of a Class A, Class B, Class C facility or Public Spa. Once classified, it must comply with the general requirements for that class, except for specific requirements unique to the novel/new pool type.



## What are the requirements for cold plunge pools?

In general, a **cold plunge pool** is a public pool that operates at 15°C or below.

New requirements for cold plunge pools include:

1. **Free available chlorine residual:** The acceptable range for free available chlorine is 5-10 ppm.
2. **If bromine is used:** The acceptable range for total bromine has increased to 2-8 ppm.
3. **Non-slip deck:** A non-slip deck is required around the entrance to the cold plunge pool.
4. **Handrail:** A handrail must be installed to assist with entry into and out of the pool.
5. **Specialized signage:** Specific signage requirements apply.
6. **Clock installation:** A clock must be installed in the pool area.



## What are the requirements for floatation pools?

A **public floatation pool** is a public pool that contains a saturated bathing solution of magnesium sulphate for floatation purposes. Floatation pools are:

- Not drained, cleaned, sanitized, and refilled before use by each individual
- Designed for multiple-person use

New requirements for floatation pools include:

1. **Free available chlorine residual:** The acceptable range for free available chlorine is 5-10ppm.
2. **If bromine is used:** The acceptable range for total bromine has increased to 2-8 ppm.
3. **Secondary treatment system:** In addition to the requirements of s.7(8) of the regulation, floatation pools must be equipped with a secondary treatment system using ultraviolet (UV) light disinfection.



## What are the requirements for hot water pools?

**Hot water pools** are public pools that operate at a temperature of 35°C or greater.

The requirements for hot water pools include the following:

1. **Chemical parameters:**
  - a. **Free available chlorine residual:** The acceptable range for free available chlorine is 5-10ppm.
  - b. **Total bromine residual:** If bromine is used, the acceptable range is 5-10ppm.
2. **Testing and recording:**
  - a. The operator must manually test and record the following parameters at least 30 minutes before opening each operating day:
    - i. Total alkalinity
    - ii. pH
    - iii. Free available chlorine and total chlorine
    - iv. Bromine residual (if used)
    - v. Water clarity
    - vi. Water temperature
3. **Specialized signage:** Specific notices must be posted as required by the regulation.
4. **Upper limit cut-off switch:**
  - a. Limits the maximum water temperature to 40°C
  - b. Operates independently of the pool's water temperature thermostat
5. **Clock installation:** A clock must be installed in the pool area.



## What are public floatation tanks, and what do the regulations require?

A **public floatation tank** is a basin, chamber, or tank that:

- Contains a saturated bathing solution of magnesium sulphate for floatation purposes.
- Is not drained, cleaned, sanitized and refilled before each use by each individual.
- Is designed for up to two bathers.
- Provides a light and sound reduced environment.

A public floatation tank is classified as a Class C facility, meaning the general provisions of a Class C facility apply, along with additional requirements specified in the regulation. These requirements include the following:

1. **Safety requirements:** A first aid kit, emergency communications device, and emergency equipment which is appropriate for use in the floatation tank are required.
2. **Operation and maintenance:** Water must be treated with chlorine, a chlorine compound or a bromine compound by means of chemical feeder.
3. **Chemical parameters:**
  - a. **Total Alkalinity Range:** The acceptable range for total alkalinity is 80-120 ppm.
  - b. **pH Range:** The acceptable range for pH is 7.2-7.8.
  - c. **Free Available Chlorine Residual:** The acceptable range for free available chlorine is 1.5-5 ppm.
  - d. **Bromine Residual:** The acceptable range for bromine is 2.5-5 ppm.
  - e. **Water Temperature:** Water temperature must be maintained at less than 37°C.
4. **Testing frequency and recording:** The operator must manually test and record results for total alkalinity, pH, free available chlorine or bromine residual and water temperature a minimum of 30 minutes before opening each operating day, then every four hours or prior to each new bather.
5. **Filtration system:** A filtration system suitable to the tank design must be provided. The system must ensure the water completes three turnovers between each bather.
6. **Shower facilities:** Shower facilities must be available for bathers to use before and after floatation tank use.
7. **Alternative filtration and disinfection:** Alternative methods for filtering and disinfecting the water in a public floatation tank may be submitted for review and written approval by the Health Department.





## Are there any safety exemptions for wading pools?

An attendant for supervision is not required for a public wading pool if ALL the following conditions are met:

1. The water depth is 15 cm or less.
2. The owner or operator provides written notification to the Health Department stating that no attendant will be provided.
3. The owner or operator develops a written safety plan, which must be readily available upon request to any person, including the Health Department.
4. A notice is posted at the wading pool informing users that no attendant is provided for supervision.



## Are there any regulatory changes affecting public spas (hot tubs)?

1. **Broadened total alkalinity range:** The acceptable range for total alkalinity has been expanded to 60-180ppm.
2. **Shared emergency phone and safety equipment:** Emergency phone and safety equipment may also be shared between two pools, or one pool and one spa in the same immediate vicinity, provided the conditions set out in the regulation are met.



## Are any pool or spa types exempted from the Regulations?

Yes, certain types of pools and spas are exempt from the Public Pools Regulation:

1. **Private residential pools and spas:** These are exempt if they are intended solely for private residential use (whether or not a fee is charged), provided a caution notice is posted stating that the pool is not subject to the regulations.
2. **Rowing club pools:** These are exempt if the water is exclusively used for rowing activities and no bathers enter the water at any time.