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Public Pools and Spas Recognized for Health, Safety

Local health officials honored several Helena-area pool and spa operators Thursday for their efforts to protect public health and safety.

Staff of the Licensed Establishment Program of Lewis and Clark Public Health presented “Gold and Silver Buoy Awards” to the operators during the regular meeting of the City-County Board of Health. This is the third year the public health department has issued the awards.

The pool awards recognize operators of public, recreational water features (pools, hot tubs, and water parks) who provide a clean, healthy, and safe environment. They’re based on annual inspections by public health sanitarians of more than 50 water facilities in Lewis and Clark County.

“Our purpose in doing inspections is to prevent disease and injury by evaluating water quality, clarity, and facility safety,” said Laurel Riek, manager of the Licensed Establishment Program. “Operating a pool or spa is complicated and requires specialized training, as well as time and attention. These awards honor those facilities that maintain safe and comfortable water chemistry even with the challenges of sporadic heavy use, ventilation in indoor areas, and weather in outdoor areas.”

Gold Buoy Awards were presented to:

- Crossroads Fitness (spas)
- City of East Helena (Kennedy Park swimming pool)
- Last Chance Splash Park (splash deck)
- Leisure Village Mobile Home Park (pool and spa)

Silver Buoy Awards were presented to:

- Baymont Inn and Suites (spa)
- Capital City Health Club (spa, lap pool, and recreational pool)
- Crossroads Fitness (pool)
- Green Meadow Country Club (pool)
- Helena Family YMCA (pool)
- Holiday Inn Express (pool and spa)
- Holiday Inn Downtown (pool and spa)

- Last Chance Splash Park (50-meter pool, leisure pool)

To qualify for a Buoy Award, operators had to meet these criteria:

- Few to no violations identified during an inspection
- Water chemistry that's comfortable and safe for swimmers
- Good water clarity
- Safe water temperatures (spas)
- Required rescue equipment, lifeguards (if needed), and CPR certification
- Regular monitoring, corrective action, and well-maintained records that track water chemistry and actions taken to maintain the pool (including closing the pool until it's safe for swimmers)
- Staff trained in pool operation
- Adequate ventilation and indoor air quality

“Gold Buoy winners have to have perfect records and monitoring and no more than two noncritical violations during an inspection, a standard that's difficult to meet,” Riek said. “Silver Buoy winners must have almost complete records of monitoring and minimal violations. The expectation is that pools are maintained every day to prevent waterborne illness.”

More information about pool inspections and the buoy awards is available on the Lewis and Clark Public Health website: www.lccountymt.gov/health/licensing-inspections/pools-spas.html