

SPRAY PARK BEST PRACTICES

Spray parks are becoming a popular and common addition to a recreation department's list of amenities. They offer children and parents an interactive play opportunity, a cooling water attraction for non-swimmers, and are accessible to individuals with special needs. They also offer several economic advantages over a pool; periodic maintenance is simpler, lifeguards are not required, and they can open early in the season and stay open later in the fall.

The following best practices are for members considering adding a spray park or if your agency already has one.

Design Phase

Spray park designs often reflect the community's local, cultural, historical, or geographical influences. Spray components can often be customized based on themes to increase the play value of the park. There should be planning for the pattern of safe play around the number of toy components.

When selecting a location for the spray park, consider these factors:

- Good access to local streets and space for the spray park and off-street parking.
- Easily patrolled by local law enforcement.
- Space for seating areas with good sightlines for parents or guardians of the spray park and other amenities such as restrooms, changing rooms, showering areas, and snack bars.
- Noise concerns of nearby residents.
- Water supply, treatment, and run-off control.
- Adjacent to other facilities such as a public pool.
- Trees and other landscaping needs.

Work with an experienced and qualified designer and construction firm. Consult with your risk manager for the appropriate levels of coverage requirements.

Your agency's attorney should be involved in drawing up contracts and agreements. Consider adding safety requirements such as documented confined space training, personal protective equipment, fall protection plan, and onsite competent persons as the project may need. Your engineering department can assist with what may be necessary for your project.

Surfacing

The surface is an important consideration. Please follow the local health department regulations. Water-impervious, nonporous surfaces will help prevent mold and biological buildup. Broom-finished, colored, stamped, or acid-etched concrete is economical and easily cleaned by power washing. Rubberized surfaces have a higher maintenance cost and can be difficult to clean.

For wheelchair access, surfaces must be 'firm, stable, and slip-resistant as specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and meet the ASTM Standard F1951-99, based on the physical effort to maneuver a wheelchair across a surface.

Rules and Signage

Signs should be conspicuously posted to encourage appropriate behavior, help ensure safety, and minimize injuries. Language should include the following:

- The park's hours of operation
- An adult must accompany children under 7 years of age
- No alcoholic beverages or drugs are allowed
- Please keep food and beverages off the pad and use trash cans
- Pets are not permitted in the spray pad area
- Please shower before use (if showers are provided)
- Do not drink the water
- Swim diapers are required for children under 4 years of age
- Individuals with diarrhea are not allowed
- Be courteous and respectful of others. Take turns. Have fun
- Surfaces may be hot – footwear is strongly recommended
- In case of injury or emergency, call 911
- Climbing on splash/spray items is not allowed (unless the item is intended to be used in such a manner)
- No modifications to spray features are permitted
- Clear the area and seek shelter when conditions for thunder or lightning are present
Consider adding a lightning warning system for the park. Modify the last bullet point to match your warning system's alert notice.

Periodic Inspections and Maintenance

Follow the manufacturer's recommended cleaning, inspection, and maintenance schedule. Document your activities. Most manufacturers can supply the necessary forms. If not, contact your risk control consultant for assistance.

Train your employees on the procedures for cleaning, inspections, and maintenance. For recirculated/treated water systems, faithfully test the water quality per the manufacturer's instructions. And document, document, document. Contaminated water is a significant concern for operators/owners of spray parks.

Establish a cleaning procedure and frequency following the manufacturer/installer's instructions. Train employees on the process and the safety procedures for using cleaning chemicals.

For services that require a vendor, use only qualified individuals or firms.