

**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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June 1, 2005

Ms. Anne Thomas
Dare County Health Department
P.O. Box 1000
Manteo, NC 27954

Dear Ms. Thomas:

Thank you for inviting me to the meeting yesterday between members of the health department, pool operators and representatives of the local association of Realtors. Your staff gave an excellent overview of the potential health and safety concerns with pools and spas at vacation rental cottages. The pool operators present were quite vocal about their concerns and I would like to share the following summary of my notes from the discussion.

Inadequate Spa Equipment:

- Builders and their suppliers base selection of equipment on the most economical options for providing the amenity with little regard to how it will be used and maintained.
- The volume of water in a typical spa at a large rental property is inadequate to handle the number of guests without becoming heavily contaminated.
- Filters are too small to be of much advantage in cleaning the water.
- Circulation pumps do not move enough water to make effective use of filtration.
- Many spas lack the chlorine or bromine feeders necessary to maintain constant disinfectant residuals.
- Floating chlorine or bromine feeders used to overcome the lack of integral disinfectant feeders are ineffective because guests remove them from the spas.
- Property managers want to prevent problems, but have no control over what equipment the owners and builders choose to provide.
- There seems to be little motivation to make pools and spas safer until after someone dies.

Pool Service Problems:

- Some property owners/managers will not pay for quality service resulting in low-cost operators taking on more pools than they can effectively manage.
- A few mistakes by a less qualified or overworked pool operators reflect on the entire pool maintenance industry.
- There is no professional licensing or registration for pool operators, so unqualified people can enter the business of maintaining pools.
- Property managers have no means of checking the qualifications of the many pool service providers.
- Without regulations, pool operators cannot control the problems in weekly rental cottages.

- Guests do not understand the dangers they may face if pools and spas are not used properly.
- Spas are used by children and fecal accidents are very common.

Suggestions from the Group:

- There need to be inspection standards for all newly constructed pools to assure equipment installed is appropriate for the intended use and can be easily serviced.
- Pool operators, builders and the health department need to agree on construction standards.
- Automatic chlorine or bromine feeders should be required equipment.
- We need to educate owners about criteria for making buying decisions for pools and spas appropriate for the intended use.
- There need to be better lines of communication between pool operators.
- There needs to be better guidance for residential pools with teeth to enforce some changes in what is installed and how they are operated.
- We need to make property owners willing to do more both up-front with installation and with continuing maintenance service.
- In the short-term some handout material could be included with rental information packets to better inform guests of their responsibilities and warn them of potential problems.
- Pool service providers and Realtors need to cooperate to eliminate some problems with pools and quality of services provided.
- There needs to be an association of pool service providers to help voice concerns and establish standards for pool services.
- There should be continuing education requirements for pool service providers.
- Professional licensing or registration should be required for pool operators.
- A video is needed on cable access to better inform people about using spas, concerns about allowing children in hot tubs and how to manage fecal accidents.

The group present seems willing to follow through on making some changes to improve the safety of pools and spas at the vacation rental homes. I would like to assist their efforts and hope you will let me know if there is anything I can do to help. I can be reached by telephone at (919) 715-0924 or by e-mail at jim.hayes@ncmail.net.

Sincerely

James A. Hayes, Program Supervisor
Pools, Tattoos and State Institutions Branch