

Why does Lee's Crossing Require Lifeguards?

The Lee's Crossing Board has discussed this question a number of times in past years in open meetings with residents in attendance, and we recognize that there are adults and pre-school children that might like to use the pool during school hours after the end of the summer school recess. The Lee's Crossing pool has always required guards (since the opening of the pool nearly forty years ago), because we believe that the presence of a guard increases the safety of our users and the security of our facilities, and because we have been able to have the pool open a large number of hours to accommodate the needs of the vast majority of our users.

Neither the county, nor the state requires lifeguards. The CDC does advocate, in the National Model Aquatic Code, that any pool with depths exceeding 5 feet should only be open with guards, but that code has not been adopted by the state. Its provisions, however, are based on science and best practices. 5 feet is the depth that an average adult can stand in a pool while having his or her nose and mouth above the waterline, and an average adult who cannot swim well should be able to rescue a child when standing in depths of 5 feet or less. The risk of drowning is substantially higher in pools with greater depths, and the Lee's Crossing pool has a maximum depth of 6 ½ feet.

Individuals, particularly children, can inhale a life threatening amount of water in a matter of seconds. It is very important to have a person on site trained in CPR and familiar with the lifesaving equipment that is available. While there are a large number of drownings across the state each year, drownings are rare in guarded pools.

The County Health Department requires that the pool chemistry be checked by a live person (not automated equipment) at least twice per day. Our pool is checked every two hours and we find, particularly with the splash pad, that guard intervention is often required to keep the chlorine and ph within required ranges. We have been told that some of the swim-at-your-own-risk neighborhoods are only contracting to have their pool checked 2 to 3 times per week and are theoretically relying on residents to check the water at other times. The reality is that users in those neighborhoods may have little assurance that the water chemistry is proper and may be at an increased risk for a variety of waterborne illnesses. These risks are magnified whenever there is a fecal, infectious or vomitous accident, because there is no guard on site to follow the health code regarding temporary closure, cleanup and shocking the pool.

Swim-at-your-own-risk neighborhoods either must invest in expensive computerized card entry systems or simply have little control over access. Even where such systems are employed, they cannot keep an individual from letting in a large number of unauthorized users. Such systems do not stop a child with a card from using the pool without supervision and do not stop solo swimming, a very dangerous practice (think of an individual swimming laps who hits his head, has an allergic reaction, seizure or a heart attack). Such neighborhoods also do not have anyone present to monitor the conduct of users. One of our nearby neighborhood pools has been the scene of impromptu, non-resident, teenage pool parties and at least one physical altercation resulting in injury to a

resident. It should also be obvious that a neighborhood facility without guards is at greater risk for vandalism.

Some neighborhoods have their pools open at swim-at-your-own-risk because they cannot afford lifeguards or simply have different priorities. Some neighborhoods offer early morning swim-at-your-own-risk hours, but ban children and solo swimming during such time (which would appear to offer a benefit to a very small number of users, while still requiring access control measures). While having lifeguards is an obvious expense, our assessments are still lower than every other swim & tennis neighborhood in the city.

We recognize that there are tradeoffs in being open only with guards. Individuals who wish to use the pool during off hours have not been able to do so at Lee's Crossing. We are open to offering other hours that our owners suggest, as long as we can provide guards, and the costs are not unreasonably prohibitive relative to the number of people to be benefited.

The Lee's Crossing pool is open 70 hours per week with guards while school is in summer recess. While it is a challenge getting guards after schools go back into session, we have always been open at least from 4 pm until 9 pm at the end of the school day. This year, we have thus far been unable to find guards to open the pool during the school week prior to 4 pm. We regret not being able to offer earlier hours, although our experience has been that very few people (typically 3 or 4) actually use the pool prior to the end of the school day.

The pool will still be open 45 hours per week after school goes back in session through the end of Labor Day. Depending on the weather, we may also offer weekend hours after Labor Day as well as weekday hours during Marietta City Schools Fall Break (the last week in September).

We continue to try to improve the enjoyment of our facilities for all of our residents and their guests. Please understand, however, that among our top priorities must be the safety of our patrons and the security of our facilities. Please help us in this regard by cooperating with our guards and following our rules. Please remember that while our guards are there to increase the safety of our patrons, their presence does not excuse your duty to supervise your children and your responsibility for your own safety.

We welcome your input.