

Panhandle

Public Health District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information, contact Jessica Davies, Health Director, at 308-760-6492 or jdavies@pphd.ne.gov.

PPHD Board of Health Adopts Regulation and Resolution to Conduct Pool Inspections

The Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) Board of Health has adopted a regulation and resolution allowing PPHD to conduct public swimming pool inspections across the 12-county service area. The action follows passage of LB759 by the Nebraska State Legislature, which transferred authority for public swimming pool operating permits and routine operational inspections from the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment (NDWEE) to local governments, including counties, cities, villages, and local public health departments.

On July 30, PPHD held a public hearing on the proposed local pool inspection regulation and resolution. Following the hearing, the Board of Health voted to adopt the regulation and resolution authorizing PPHD to assume local pool inspection authority. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services has provided final approval of PPHD's local authority.

"Public swimming pools are valued community gathering places, and they also require consistent oversight to reduce potential public health risks, including waterborne illnesses, chemical exposures, safety hazards, communicable disease outbreaks, severe injury, and drowning," said Jessica Davies, MPH, PPHD Health Director.

She added, "by bringing this responsibility closer to home, PPHD can provide timely, locally responsive support to pool operators while continuing to help protect the health and safety of the residents we serve."

PPHD will oversee operating permits, renewals, routine inspections, and related education for public swimming pools in Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Grant, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, and Sioux counties. NDWEE will continue to issue construction permits for new public swimming pools and qualifying modifications to existing pools.

PPHD has been preparing for the transition since LB759 was approved. Planning included discussions with local health departments, NDWEE, the Nebraska Environmental Health Association, the



Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors, the Nebraska Association of County Officials, and the League of Nebraska Municipalities. PPHD also held a transition planning discussion with area counties and cities, shared updates with local governments and pool operators, and hosted a virtual update meeting with Panhandle pool operators.

PPHD Community Health Planning Manager Megan Barhafer has completed the necessary training and participated in local inspection ride-alongs with NDWEE staff. This work supports a smooth local transition and helps ensure pool operators have timely guidance and support.

The new responsibility builds on PPHD's existing partnerships with area pools. PPHD supports the Pool Cool sun safety program by providing sunscreen and promotional signage to encourage sun-safe habits and has offered mini-grants to assist pools with shade structures. Local pool inspection authority provides another way for PPHD to work alongside pool operators to promote safe, healthy recreational spaces throughout the Panhandle.

For questions regarding pool inspections contact, Megan Barhafer mbarhafer@pphd.ne.gov ; 308-633-2866

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.