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Pool Safety Basics at Public Pools

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Abstract: Pool rules and safety guidelines have remained consistent since public swimming pools first gained popularity in the 1920s. This study sought to reevaluate those rules in light of modern contexts, assign a metric to their success or failure, and suggest new and revised guidelines that public pools can implement.

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Pool Safety Basics at Public Pools

SWIMMING FANS of the baby-boomer generation were excited in 1998 when PSI Collectibles released fully restored, sandwich board and mountable editions of the original pool rules that were posted at public pools across the country. Looking at these beautifully remastered pool rules not only reminds us of a simpler, more idyllic time, but also how far we still need to go in order to become a truly enlightened society. We see tried and true standbys like, “NO RUNNING” and, “NO EATING IN POOL AREA” along with reminders of an archaic past, such as, “NO 2-PIECE SWIMWEAR.” It would be nice to think of these quaint reproductions as nothing more than relics of another age, but they are, in fact, much closer to our present reality than most would care to admit.

When these antique pool rules are compared to the rules that grace nearly every public pool area in the country, it becomes easy to spot how little progress has been made in the field of swimming pool rules and safety over the last half-century. Most of us now know that there is no correlation between eating and swimming soon after, but you wouldn’t know that based solely on the posted rules that appear at an astounding 88.7867% of the 1,900 public swimming pools that my research team surveyed. Many of the other rules that appear at those aquatic institutions do little to nothing to enhance the safety of visitors to the pool. It seems that when it comes to swimming pool safety, assumptions, traditions, and reactionary politics overrule logic and scientific data.

It is in light of these facts that I undertook this study and sought to reassess and reevaluate the effectiveness of current pool safety epistemology—with the ultimate goal being to inspire a complete paradigm shift in the industry, and bring pool safety standards out of the dark ages.

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