

Board of health approves new inspection program

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

The licensing of swimming pools and spas across northeast Colorado was a topic of conversation during the Dec. 16 Board of Health meeting, as members voted to implement the new swimming pool and spa voluntary program beginning Jan. 1, 2010.

At the boards' request, Carmen Vandebark, consumer protection coordinator for the Northeast Colorado Health Department, reintroduced a proposal for the implementation of a new inspection program that would affect 35 swimming pools and spas across northeast Colorado. The program was first introduced during last months' meeting when board members, in an effort to avoid passing on mandatory fees to facility owners, suggested Vandebark put together a plan for a voluntary program.

According to Vandebark, public swimming pools and spas must adhere to health and safety regulations per state statute and federal regulations, but there is no agency in this area enforcing that those requirements are met. Those regulations cover things such as facility design and construction, operation and management, and the possibility of human and environmental contamination.

"What those regulations are there for is to ensure that public swimming pools and spas are operating as safely as possible," said Vandebark. "This includes everything from making sure main drains are meeting safety code to ensuring that the water is safe to be in. Facilities that regularly follow and meet these regulations are helping to keep their customers safe by lowering the chances of entrapment drowning for young children and reducing the incidence of waterborne disease outbreaks."

Under the new proposal this voluntary program will offer public pools and spas the opportunity for licensure under NCHD. Any participating pool and/or spa would pay a yearly fee which includes biannual inspections for things such as inadequate disinfectant levels, pH concentrations and main drain visibility. The yearly fee would also include follow-up inspections as needed for discovered violations, complaint inspections as needed if a signed complaint is issued, and pool safety education. In addition the facility would be classified as being licensed and regularly inspected by NCHD.

Facilities that choose not to participate in the program would only be charged if NCHD received a signed complaint in regards to the health, safety and/or welfare of the public. In that instance,

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a fee of \$30 per hour would be charged for all related complaint response and investigation, including follow-up inspections if necessary.

In other business the board:

—Accepted the November financials.

—Approved an amendment to the 2009 budget in the amount of \$692,885. According to Shawn Alsup, NCHD's administrative director, the discrepancy comes from an increase in contract revenues that were received mid-year.

—Approved the proposed 2010 budget totaling \$3.1 million.

—Approved a resolution that is good until the end of the year authorizing NCHD to borrow against their certificates of deposit to cover year-end payroll and other payables as necessary. As of the Dec. 16 board meeting NCHD had over half a million dollars out in aged receivables, most of it coming from contractual reimbursements. According to John Crosthwait, NCHD's district public health administrator, the matter is slowly being taken care of and is the result of numerous reporting requirements and changes in fiscal staffing at the state level.

—Approved a change to NCHD's personnel policy regarding meal reimbursement. Beginning Jan. 1 NCHD will no longer reimburse employees for meal expenses that were incurred during travel unless the travel cannot be completed wholly within one day.