



**State of Louisiana**  
Louisiana Department of Health  
Office of Secretary

April 10, 2025

Amanda Ames, P.E., Chief Engineer  
Bureau of Engineering Services  
Office of Public Health  
Louisiana Department of Health  
628 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street | P.O. Box 4489  
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Re: Letter of Intent - Underwater Seat Bench (LAC 51:XXIV.317.D.1) and Unobstructed Deck Width (LAC 51:XXIV.323.F.3) Requirements

Dear Ms. Ames:

The Louisiana Administrative Code (LAC), Title 51 Public Health - State Sanitary Code, Part XXIV (Swimming Pools and Natural or Semi-Artificial Swimming or Bathing Places), Section 317.D.1, does not allow underwater seat benches. However, Section 311.A of this Part does allow water depths less than 3 feet with the prior written permission of the state health officer. Based upon your staff's research, underwater seat benches are widely allowed throughout the country by state and model swimming pool codes and standards. Therefore, in reference to this section it is my intent to allow underwater seat benches only when the following design requirements are strictly met.

1. "Underwater Bench" is defined as a submerged seat with or without hydrotherapy jets.
2. Underwater seat benches shall only be allowed in areas of the pool that are less than five feet deep.
3. Underwater seats shall not project into swim lanes.
4. The minimum and maximum water depth over the bench seat shall be 6 inches and 20 inches respectively.
5. Underwater seat benches shall have a seat depth of 14 to 18 inches projecting from the pool wall to the front edge of the seat or may be recessed from the main body of the pool a maximum of 36 inches. If recessed, the seat bench shall be a maximum of 18 inches wide with the remaining space for leg room.
6. A permanent colored band of dark, contrasting, and slip-resistant tile shall be installed at the front edge of the seat extending two inches on the horizontal and vertical surfaces. The stripe shall be plainly visible to persons on the pool deck. Vinyl liner, stainless steel, and fiberglass pools may use other material for the bench edge marking provided the material is permanently secured, dark in color, non-fading, and slip-resistant.

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7. The underwater seat bench's front edge shall be rounded and have a minimum radius of one inch.
8. Underwater seats and benches shall not be used as the required entry/exit access unless they are in conjunction with pool steps.
9. If the underwater seat bench is constructed in conjunction with pool steps, then a handrail must be installed in compliance with such requirements as required in the LAC Title 51 Part XXIV (Swimming Pools).

Additionally, Part XXIV (Swimming Pools and Natural or Semi-Artificial Swimming or Bathing Places), Section 323.F.3, requires a specific minimum unobstructed deck width. However, Section 103.A of this Part does prescribe that the State Health Officer has jurisdiction over the design, construction, and operation of all swimming pools, water parks, and water slides, public or private, including, but not limited to those owned by clubs, private schools, apartment houses, and condominiums. Based upon your staff's research, deck obstructions (e.g., deck planter, adjacent spa, and infinity edge) have been allowed throughout the country by state and model swimming pool codes and standards. So, in reference to this section it is my intent to allow certain deck obstructions only when the following requirement is strictly met.

1. For unguarded pools, provide a perimeter deck such that the entire perimeter and depth of the POOL is readily reachable by a pole and hook from the perimeter deck. (Section 4.8.1.5.1.3 Unguarded Aquatic Venues, CDC's Model Aquatic Health Code [MAHC], 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, December 2024)

Please ensure that copies of this letter are circulated to your staff and others as appropriate. Should questions arise, they should be directed to Amanda Ames, P.E., Chief Engineer, Engineering Services at (225) 342-7499.

Sincerely,

Signed by:  
  
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Ralph L. Abraham, M.D.  
Surgeon General/State Health Officer