

AMHERST - PELHAM *Regional* SCHOOL DISTRICT
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

Office of the Superintendent
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January 29, 2008

Dear Middle School Swimming Pool Participant:

You may not be aware of this but we have a few athletes on the High School swim team who have been ill recently. In one instance, we know this is directly related to exposure to elevated levels of chlorine in our middle school pool. These illnesses seem to be limited to our competitive swimmers and, as far as we know, not to our gym classes or recreational swimmers. Still, if your swimmer has experienced symptoms after swimming, please let us know and if you have concerns, please notify your physician.

As of today, January 29, 2008, we believe the problem has been caused by higher than standard levels of chlorine. As has been done in the past when chemical levels were not at standard levels, the pool is closed, the water is being treated, and the pool will reopen when standards are met. We also continue to monitor other aspects of the pool environment.

When concerns were first raised, the situation was reviewed with the Amherst Department of Public Works (DPW) and communicated with the Amherst Health Department. DPW handles pool testing and pool water treatment. Monitoring procedures for chlorine levels, air and water temperatures, and swim practice procedures were all reviewed.

Today, we had the State of Massachusetts pool inspector here to test the pool water and review procedures. Using his pool testing kit, readings indicate elevated levels of chlorine. As noted, the pool will not be in use until this is rectified. In addition, he discovered that test kits purchased through an institutional swimming pool supply company and used locally were not as accurate as the one used by the state. As a result, the testing kit recommended by the state has been purchased and we have implemented other precautionary protocols.

Since we first became aware of the student concerns, Karen Keough-Huff, athletic director, communicated routinely with Mark Jackson, high school principal; Ron Bohonowicz, director of facilities; Fran Ziperstein, middle school principal; and Jere Hochman, superintendent. Mr. Bohonowicz has been in constant communication with the Amherst Health Department Director about this situation. On Monday night, January 28, Ms. Keough-Huff met with parents from the swim team and coaches to discuss our efforts to address the situation with the pool and to hear their concerns.

All of the aforementioned school personnel have also met with representatives of the health department, the Amherst DPW, and LSSE to review the situation and all facets of water treatment, testing, protocols and supervision.

As a result of these discussions, we will continue current practices of:

- Taking a minimum of four (4) chlorine tests throughout the day to insure levels are at the standard;
- Monitoring air temperature, water temperature, and ventilation;
- Implementing additional protocols for routine test reporting and communications;
- Requiring all pool users to shower prior to using the pool;
- Insuring coaches inquire about the presence of any symptoms experienced by swimmers after practice and requesting parents to inform the athletic director and a physician, if necessary, of any symptoms their children report to them.

Although the chlorine level is the primary area of concern, a review of ventilation has been completed with necessary adjustments made. Pool areas doors must remain closed to maximize the ventilation system. Some have suggested that water-level fans be mounted on the walls near the pool; however, this creates an electrical safety hazard. As noted, coaches will require swimmers to shower before practice and to hold exercise and other non-pool trainings outside the pool area where it is not as hot. The adjustments that have been made have already yielded improvement of conditions and a positive response from the swimmers.

We are sorry that this situation has occurred. We will continue to make every effort to insure student safety and good health. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Keough-Huff, Ms. Ziperstein, Ms. Chalfant, or me.

Sincerely,

Jere Hochman
Superintendent

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