Public swimming pools are great places to have fun and get out of the summer heat. But did you know that spraygrounds, splash pads, and wet decks that recirculate water are considered special use pools in Ohio? These pools are very popular and being installed all over Ohio. It’s important to remember that under state law, all public swimming pools, including spraygrounds, must be reviewed and inspected by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) during construction and before licensing by the local health department. This will help to ensure that they are healthy and safe environments for everyone.

Design plans must be sent to ODH for review and approval prior to construction. Information on the standards for construction are located in Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 3701-31-05.1. This rule covers everything from materials for building public swimming pools and spraygrounds to signs and decks for public swimming pools and spraygrounds. In some, but not all, circumstances plans for public swimming pools should be approved by ODH prior to submitting to a building department and before ground is broken for the public swimming pool or sprayground.

Once plans are approved and construction begins, inspections must be requested by the operator of the pool or contractor building the sprayground. The inspection of all the pipes and drains is called a rough or underground inspection. This inspection must be done before concrete is poured and before the pipes and drains are covered. Once a request for inspection is received by ODH, the inspection must be scheduled within two business days.

After the rough inspection is complete, the rest of the public swimming pool or sprayground can be built. When the construction of the public swimming pool or sprayground is completed and ready for use, a final inspection must be requested by the operator of the pool or contractor to receive final approval from ODH. Once approved, the next and final step is to obtain a license from the local health district.

Minimum standards for the design, installation, operation, and maintenance of these facilities were established to protect the public from injury, minimize the potential for disease transmission, and provide a safe and healthy recreational environment for Ohioans as they enjoy the summer season. Contact Mary Shaffer, Recreation Programs Administrator, in the Ohio Department of Health’s Bureau of Environmental Health and Radiation Protection if you have questions about how state regulations apply to your public swimming pool or sprayground. She can be reached at Mary.Shaffer@odh.ohio.gov or (614) 466-6736.